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**THE KNIGHT'S TALE**



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DRYDEN'S  
PALAMON AND ARCITE

OR, THE KNIGHT'S TALE

*FROM CHAUCER*

EDITED

WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

PERCIVAL CHUBB

PRINCIPAL OF THE HIGH SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF THE  
ETHICAL CULTURE SCHOOLS, NEW YORK

New York

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## PREFATORY NOTE AS TO THE USE OF THIS EDITION



IN editing this work, I have proceeded on the assumption that in using it the teacher will aim, not merely to meet the bare requirements for entrance to college, but to make the best possible use of it as an instrument of literary culture. There is plenty of time for such a broad, generous treatment of all the books prescribed for study and reading, in any wisely planned course of four or even of three years; time, indeed, for a good deal more than this. The reading of *Palamon and Arcite* may be made the occasion, not only of acquainting the student with Dryden and the important part which he played in inaugurating an age of prose and reason, but, more valuable still, of comparing the work and genius of two great English poets in a singularly helpful and happy way. Dryden is well worth knowing, Chaucer even more so; and Dryden's poem, apart from its independent interest and worth, which are considerable, carries with



it the especial recommendation that it offers an easy and enticing avenue of approach to Chaucer. Better yet, here is a chance, to be greedily seized, of educating the student's literary taste, of developing his literary discrimination and insight, by a method which may be made to yield more satisfactory results than any other—the comparative method. To subserve these two supplementary aims, as well as the primary aim of familiarizing the student with Dryden and his time, is the purpose of the present edition.

I have considered that the best way to make this comparative study possible and fruitful is to develop the comparisons in the notes, rather than by means of an introductory essay. I have, therefore, drawn attention there to those passages in Chaucer's original which are best calculated to throw into bold relief, and to bring home to the feelings of the student, the significant differences between the two poets and their unique poetic gifts.

Another aim which I have sought to realize in the notes is that of relating this to other works which are to be read to meet the college entrance requirements, as well as to some of those more familiar classics—such as Milton's minor poems, Shakespeare's easier plays, Goldsmith's and Gray's poems, and the Bible (and of this, happily, we are beginning to take

some notice as a literary masterpiece) — which every student may be expected to have read before he leaves the High School. This has not been done exhaustively, nor, as I hope, exhaustingly to the student. That it ought to be done to some extent cannot be doubted; and not merely for the sake of recalling and revivifying works with which the student has already become acquainted, but in order that his literary knowledge and interests may be solidified and suggestively organized.

Furthermore, in order to develop literary appreciation, the notes raise for the student not a few questions as to the structure or plot of the poem and as to the characters. The fact that these notes are mixed with those which explain words and allusions, renders it necessary for the teacher to exercise tact and discretion in the handling of the notes in general. In most cases it will probably be wise to direct the student in his first careful reading of the text — not that first, eager, rapid reading, which he is almost sure to give it for his own preliminary satisfaction and enjoyment — to appeal to the notes only when he needs light upon an obscurity, and to leave the remaining notes until, having mastered the more obvious difficulties, he is ready for a critical consideration of its deeper problems.

How to make use of the introduction is another

matter which must be left to the teacher's judgment and tact. He may decide (as the writer generally does in such cases) that the reading of most of it had better be left until the work itself has been read. In the present instance it will suffice if sections I. and IV. (in part perhaps) are read by way of preparing the student for the study of the poem; while the reading of sections II. and III. may be advantageously postponed until, by that study, he has been interested in Dryden and his work. As a rule, it is well not to bar the approach to a literary masterpiece by formidable prolegomena. The author's work and a literary appreciation of it are our main concerns, from which we must not allow either ourselves or our students to be diverted. Biographical and historical considerations (peace to the followers of Taine's sociological formularies) are quite secondary. By all means let us make the most of the student's keen appetite for a new thing by slaking it upon the work itself.

Let me add that the text here used is that of Christie in the Globe Edition of Dryden's *Poetical Works*.

PERCIVAL CHUBB.

NEW YORK, 25th February, 1899.

## INTRODUCTION



### I. DRYDEN'S IMPORTANCE

“**DRYDEN** and **Pope** are not classics of our poetry : they are classics of our prose.” Such is **Matthew Arnold’s** verdict upon these two famous writers. It is a verdict that would be disputed by other eminent critics, who regard the best poetry of both **Dryden** and **Pope** as falling below only that of the four acknowledged masters of poetic expression,—**Chaucer** and **Spenser**, **Shakespeare** and **Milton**. **Arnold** undoubtedly expresses the feeling of most of us. When we come from the study of the greatest poets of this century—**Wordsworth** and **Coleridge**, **Byron** and **Shelley**, **Keats**, **Tennyson**, and **Browning**—to **Dryden**, **Pope**, and the poets of the eighteenth century, we feel that we have passed from an atmosphere of poetry to one of prose. And yet we must beware of hasty and one-sided judgments. There are

many kinds of excellence in poetry. The peculiar excellencies of Dryden and Pope are certainly not those of Wordsworth and Shelley; and yet they may be in their way great excellencies, to which it would be a pity and a loss to remain insensible and indifferent. At least we may be sure, when we find these two poets enthusiastically praised by such voices as those of Gray and Johnson, Scott and Lowell, that they have something valuable to offer us. We ought, therefore, to approach them in a mood of sympathetic expectation. Pope, however, we may for our present purpose leave aside; we are to try to get near to his greater forerunner and master, Dryden, whose superiority is generally admitted: Dryden, incontestably the greatest literary figure between Milton and Wordsworth, and one of the most significant in the history of English letters, because under his leadership was accomplished one of the most important changes in style, in the status of literature, and in the social position of the man of letters.

Let us begin by getting a provisional idea of Dryden's claims upon our consideration. First of all, as a poet he produced a small body of verse that has a high degree of absolute poetic value. Such—to name the most familiar poems—are his three well-known odes, *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, *Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music*, and *To the Pious*

*Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew*; his lines *To my Friend, Mr. Congreve*; and his masterpiece of satirical verse,—the greatest of its kind in our literature,—*Mac Flecknoe*. Scarcely inferior in merit to *Mac Flecknoe*, and ranking with it above all other compositions of the kind,—not even excepting Pope's *Dunciad*,—is *Absalom and Achitophel*, a biting satire which contains a series of unmatched portraits of famous contemporaries. Nor must we fail to pay high tribute to his two longer poems, *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther*, as being our best models of argumentative verse,—rather tiresome as wholes to us to-day, but relieved here and there by passages of masterly power. To these we must add his classical translation of Virgil, and his entertaining *Fables*, among them *Palamon and Arcite*, the best of all. His twenty-eight plays and most of his miscellaneous occasional poems we can, unless we are specialists, well afford to neglect.

But Dryden's merit as a poet is almost equalled by his merit as a prose writer, especially in the field of criticism. He helped more than any one else to found our modern prose style; and he is, if not the | "father of modern criticism," as Johnson called him, at least its foster-father, and by far the most important figure in English criticism up to his time; our first really methodical and penetrating critic, who

united a vigorous intellect with wide knowledge, painstaking research, poetic insight, and a new power of lucid exposition. His early *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* (1667), his later, mature *Discourses of Satire* (1692), and *Epic Poetry* (1697), together with many of his critical introductions to his own works (notably to the *Fables*), are classical contributions toward a science of criticism.

Again, in Dryden, considered as the literary dictator of his age, we have one of the dominating figures in English literary history. Like portly Ben Jonson before him at the "Mermaid," like the ungainly and irascible Doctor Johnson after him at the "Turk's Head," Dryden, in his own day at "Will's" Coffee-house, held undisputed sway over the poets and writers of his time. The older men sought his approval; the young, his encouragement and advice. "Glorious John" Dryden had not the learning or the imaginative force of "Rare Ben Jonson"; he had not the heroic fibre and masterful personality of the great "Doctor"; but by his easy supremacy, his amiability, and his generous recognition of merit, especially in the young, he makes, as we recall him, throned in his big armchair, — in winter, before the hearth; in summer, on the balcony, — a good third in this trio of great literary lawgivers.

## II. THE MAN AND HIS WORK

His life was uneventful, and an account of it reduces itself to little more than a chronicle of his literary productions. He was born at Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, on the 9th of August, 1631. Thus he was for forty-three years a contemporary of Milton (1608-1674), and lived through the Puritan Revolution and the Protectorate of the Cromwells (1653-1660), the Restoration of 1660, and the Revolution of 1688. His family on both sides were staunch Puritans: his father, Erasmus Dryden, was a son of that Sir Erasmus Dryden who had been imprisoned for opposing the exactions of Charles I.; and his mother's kinsfolk, the Pickerings, also sided with the popular party. John Dryden, however, in accord with the majority of his countrymen, fell away from the Puritan cause and the Commonwealth, tired of its lofty, hard, sour ways, and longing for a little more ease and pleasure. So that, although Dryden's life overlaps by forty years and more that of Milton, the two poets belong to two different periods and embody two almost opposing tempers and tendencies. Dryden's literary activity may be taken as dating from the year of the Restoration (1660), and lasting for forty years, until 1700. Notwithstanding that during these years Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), and *Paradise Regained* (1671),



and *Samson Agonistes* (1671), were published, they were, in fact, belated survivals of an earlier literary period, the spirit of which now gave way to one of reactionary license and corruption. No earnest poet would have chosen to be born into such a belittling and discrediting period.

The boy was sent to the famous Westminster School, where John Locke, the philosopher, was among his schoolmates. From there he went in 1650, with a king's scholarship, to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his bachelor's degree in 1654. It was in this year that his father died, leaving him a small property of about £40 a year (worth four times the present value probably). He had literary ambitions and soon after came to London, where he made his home until his death. He had written some poor verses at school and college; but his first serious effort was his *Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Cromwell*, which, while marred by some of the far-fetched conceits of the prevailing poetic mode, shows signs of a new strength and directness. His enthusiasm for Cromwell was not deep-seated, though; for on the Restoration of Charles II. in 1660, he transferred his admirations to that merry monarch, and swelled the coronation praises with his *Astræa Redux* (Justice Returned). This poem showed a deft handling of the heroic couplet, which was destined to be the favorite verse-form for

a hundred years to come. It should be said that Dryden was not alone in these turn-coat performances; the poet Waller, no mean poet, was equally ready with his magnanimous praises of both Cromwell and Charles.

Dryden was married in 1663 to Lady Elizabeth Howard. The marriage was an unhappy one. The best thing that can be said of husband and wife is, that they both loved their children. Lady Elizabeth was a tender, watchful mother; and we have several evidences of Dryden's own affectionate solicitude for his three sons.

The year 1663 was, however, more fortunately eventful for Dryden in relation to his literary ambitions. In that year the theatres were reopened, after a period of Puritanical suppression. Dryden saw his chance as a playwright, and seized it. Until 1681, the date of the publication of *Absalom and Achitophel*, he worked almost unceasingly as a dramatist. He catered for his public, for the most part, according to its own depraved tastes; and many of his plays are so stained by grossness that they are no longer readable. The London populace was holding high riot, led by a profligate king and his courtiers; and Dryden was one of its applauded purveyors of indecent entertainment.

It was in 1665 that Dryden's newly begun activity as a dramatic writer was interrupted by the outbreak

of the Plague, which closed the theatres. The year following was marked by the Great Fire which swept the city, and by the English naval victory over the Dutch. These three events gave Dryden topics for a long poem, *Annus Mirabilis*, which added much to his fame. It was written in quatrains, and has a few good stanzas; but it is, on the whole, a wearisome performance, although it pleased people at the time. Dryden seems to have composed it in the country, at his father-in-law's residence, where he turned his period of enforced retirement to further use by writing his *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, which he published in 1668.

The fact that Dryden was in 1670 appointed Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal, indicates clearly enough that he had advanced to a foremost place among the writers of his time. He was on friendly terms with the most influential men about the Court, and those wealthy and aristocratic amateurs and patrons of letters upon whose patronage the success of a literary man at that time largely depended. These court appointments brought him £200 a year, and the customary butt of Canary wine from the king's cellars. He was indeed prosperous, his total income being probably about £700 a year—a considerable sum in those days.

One episode only, in connection with this period of

dramatic activity, deserves record here, — Dryden's contact with the aged Milton in the very year of the blind poet's death. Dryden, it is said, called on Milton to ask permission to adapt *Paradise Lost* to a play in rhyme, a sort of opera. Milton, who was civil enough toward the writer of whom he is said to have spoken as "a great rhymers, but no poet," readily gave him leave "to tag his verses." Thereupon Dryden hastily wrote and published his adaptation, *The State of Innocence*. To us this opera is itself less important than the Preface, which pays a warm tribute to Milton's poem as "undoubtedly one of the greatest, most noble, and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced." This was said, it must be remembered, at a time when Milton's fame was in eclipse, and in spite of Dryden's own anti-Puritanical bias. When later, in 1688, a fine folio edition of *Paradise Lost* was published, to which Dryden himself subscribed, it contained under the engraved portrait of the poet, Dryden's famous lines: —

Three poets in three distant ages born,  
Greece, Italy, and England did adorn.  
The first in loftiness of thought surpassed,  
The next in majesty, in both the last.  
| The force of Nature could no farther go ;  
| To make the third, she joined the former two.

Dryden was already becoming involved in the jeal-

ousies and quarrels of his friends and patrons. He was not, like his successor Pope, of a quarrelsome disposition; but even he could not avoid making enemies. Among these was a former friend, the disreputable Earl of Rochester. He it was who is supposed to have instigated a cowardly and savage night-attack upon Dryden, in the neighborhood of Covent Garden, in the winter of 1679. The ruffians who assaulted him escaped, and no clue to them could be found.

It was not until 1681, however, that Dryden finally compromised himself as a Tory partisan in the political and religious quarrels that were agitating his countrymen. Apparently tired of play-writing, and ambitious to win greener laurels, he found an opportunity to exhibit his power as a satirist. In *Absalom and Achitophel*, published in 1681, he fiercely satirizes Lord Shaftesbury and his Protestant supporters, who were trying to prevent the succession of the Duke of York to the English throne because he was a Papist. Dryden had no quarrel with Shaftesbury, who was not a bad man; and, although his sympathies may have been genuinely with the King, the Duke of York, and the Tory party, his chief motive to the attack seems to have been to win new favor and patronage from the powerful court party. The poem was an immense success. The Whigs chafed under the attack, and produced some replies. These led to Dryden's dash-

ing off a second satire against Shaftesbury, *The Medal*, which stirred up still angrier strife. Among the replies to it was one by the leading Whig poet, Thomas Shadwell. It was savagely personal, and Dryden was so angered by it that he decided to pillory the offending poet. This he did by his *Mac Flecknoe, or a Satire on the True Blue Protestant Poet, T. S.*, in which he poured upon Shadwell (Mac Flecknoe; that is, the son of Flecknoe, a ridiculous rhymester who bored his countrymen with his voluminous dulness) such contemptuous, witty scorn as no malefactor had ever brought down upon himself. This poem was followed by a second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, written by Dryden's friend Nahum Tate (a nonentity who later became Poet Laureate), with the exception of two hundred powerful lines which Dryden himself contributed.

Dryden, having within a year produced these masterpieces of satire, turned now to take part in the religious polemics of the time, which were intermixed with its political controversies. First, in 1682, he published his *Religio Laici* (A Layman's Religion), a skilful defence of the religion of the Church of England. It shows his masculine intellectual power and his gift of clear and effective presentation. That it was evidence of his sincerity and earnestness of conviction cannot, however, be added; for on the death

of Charles II. and the accession of James II., who was a Roman Catholic, Dryden became most conveniently a convert to Catholicism, and in 1687 gave, in *The Hind and the Panther*, a defence of his new creed. This poem, too, exhibits Dryden's unusual powers of thought, and the energy and precision of his style, at their ripest; indeed, as we read it, we cannot help feeling that its admirable stylistic qualities go far toward warranting Mr. Saintsbury's assertion that Dryden is, "without exception, the greatest craftsman in English letters." Not the most inspired writer — far from it; but a victorious craftsman, who has conquered his craft by years of assiduous practice, those long years of journeyman effort upon the drama. He had mastered the technique of his art, not alone by this practice, but by serious studies of the great masters, of his native tongue, and of the best criticism both of the ancients and of the new French school. He has himself told us that at one period (about 1673) he most carefully reread the English poets who, to his mind, had most to teach him, — Waller, Denham, Cowley, Milton, and Spenser, — with an eye to their turns of word and thought; and all this study bore its fruit in the works which, beginning with *Absalom and Achitophel*, he produced after his fiftieth year, and upon which his reputation almost entirely rests.

Among these successes of his maturity, we must

notice especially his *Ode to the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady, Mrs.* [Mistress = Miss] *Anne Killigrew*, prefixed to a volume of that young woman's poems published in 1686; the ode which Dr. Johnson regarded as "undoubtedly the noblest ode our language ever has produced"; and the *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*, written in the following year, which, while not equal to his second in honor of the same occasion, the *Alexander's Feast*, is yet one of his most attractive compositions.

The Revolution of 1688, which drove James II. from the throne, and installed William and Mary in his place, brought misfortune for Dryden. Being a Roman Catholic,—and this time he did not, like the Vicar of Bray in the popular old ballad, change with the times,—he was deprived of his offices of Poet Laureate, Historiographer Royal, and Collector of Customs for London. Although some of his wealthy friends seem to have helped him privately, he was in great financial straits, and had recourse once more to the drama as a means of support. Between 1688 and 1694 he produced four plays (one of them a success), and a strikingly successful dramatic opera, for which the musician Purcell, perhaps the greatest of English musicians, composed the music. He was also busy with various translations of the Latin classics; and in 1693 began his great translation of Vir



gil, which he finished in 1696, and published in 1697. This brought him about £1200, which was an unprecedentedly large return for a literary venture in those days. He had received valuable assistance in his work; among others, Addison, then a rising young author, contributed the arguments of the several books, and an *Essay on the Georgics*. The work was an instant success, and a second revised edition soon followed the first.

Dryden indomitably kept up his struggle against poverty to the last. His crowning achievement was the *Alexander's Feast*, already referred to, composed in 1697, soon after he had published his Virgil, and, according to a probable story, written at a white heat in a single night. The next year he began to work upon his versions of stories by Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Ovid, which he published in 1699 as a volume of *Fables*. He was a sick old man, upon whom the shadow of death already rested. "Betwixt my intervals of physick and other remedies," he writes to a charming young kinswoman, who showed him much attention, "I am still drudging on; always a poet and never a good one. I pass my time sometimes with Ovid and sometimes with our old English poet, Chaucer, translating such stories as best please my fancy." He was gratified by the public's appreciative reception of his volume of *Fables*; and with new

hopes, despite his sickness, planned to translate Homer. But the end was near. He died on May Day, 1700. His last years and days were sweetened by the devotion of friends; and on his death he received the honors of a splendid public funeral. The body was taken with an imposing escort of a hundred carriages from the College of Physicians, where it had lain in state, to Westminster Abbey, and was buried there in the Poets' Corner, close to the graves of Chaucer and Cowley. For more than twenty years there had been no one who disputed with him the first place in literary England; and his funeral had the dignity of a national mourning.

A good impression of the poet's personality is preserved for us in Godfrey Kneller's portrait of him, painted toward the close of his life, in 1698. It is a strong, handsome face; bespeaking above all things the conquering energy of his robust intellect, and—despite the rather heavy, sensuous fulness, which explains the gross element in his work—the amiable disposition that won him so many friends. He had the ruddy hue of health,—“cherry-cheeked,” as Shadwell called him,—save for a large mole on the right cheek; sleepy, downcast eyes that were unusually far apart; long and luxuriant gray hair. He was short and stout,—“plump,” as Pope remembered him; of pleasing address; rather shy and retiring toward

strangers, easy and lively with friends. It was not an overmastering personality; not the personality of a man of original and unique genius. It might have been, perhaps, had he not fallen on evil days; but he was subdued to the pettiness of a little and infertile age, and took all too yieldinglly the impress of its littleness. And yet Dryden has a certain vigorous largeness by which he obviously outranks all his contemporary scribes, with some exception in favor of the only man who in that barren close of the seventeenth century gave us, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a work that has the amplitude of a classic. "The greatest man of a little age," such Dryden was indeed; but that little age, because it was an age of transition, and a turning-point in literary history, we must know something about before we can truly appraise the work which Dryden, its greatest influence, did for it.

### III. HIS AGE AND HIS SERVICE TO IT

When Arnold says that Dryden and Pope are "classics of our prose," he means that, although the bulk of their work is in verse, yet that verse is distinguished by the qualities that go to the making of good prose rather than of good poetry; the qualities of clearness, precision, measure, order, good sense. In the

qualities of imagination and passion, which are those of great poetry, they are singularly lacking. Those had been the luxuriant qualities of Elizabethan literature, and survived under the stress of an exalting religious enthusiasm in the work of Milton. But the Age of the Restoration, to which Dryden belonged, was an age of emotional exhaustion. It sought relaxation and rest after a period of intense feeling and stormy activity. It wished to live leisurely through the senses and the understanding, and not to be worried by the deeper and graver problems of life. The English people, after concerning themselves through Spenser and Shakespeare and Milton, through Sidney and Bacon and Sir Thomas Browne, with the grander aspects of human destiny and the more tragic issues of human life; after recalling with great imaginative daring and profound emotional realization the great crises and swaying personalities of human history; — turned with a sigh of relief to their home affairs, and to humbler, more domestic, more commonplace themes. They wished to be gently interested and amused by an entertaining, facile treatment of familiar topics and current events.

This change of interest and temper is strikingly shown by the titles and subject-matter of Dryden's poems. They deal with passing incidents; they are largely "occasional." When Dryden does take other,

broader themes, he is generally a borrower and adapter, or a translator. A true child of his age, whose imprint he so readily takes, he has no deep-rooted, inspiring convictions of his own; no philosophy that gives rich tone and color to his life; no well of spontaneous feeling; no rush of impulse that stirs him to write. What he does, he does calculatingly, according to precedent, or by rules which he has been trying to work out for himself. When he began to write, poetry was becoming hopelessly artificial, and was stuccoed with extravagant conceits that were mere shams of the exuberant richness of an earlier age. Dryden, although he set out by aping this manner, and was always a little artificial, did to a considerable extent react against it, and inaugurated a new sincerity and directness of style. He ceased for the most part to strain a-tiptoe after the ornaments of an age of really rich fancy and imagination; and failing of inspiration, worked by method and "pale forethought." He would indulge in no practices and tricks which he could not justify by common-sense principles; and whenever he made a new departure, he generally tried to justify it in one of those interesting dissertations which he prefixed to his works. In other words, behind the poet stood the critic. Dryden, then, represents for the first time in English literary history this conscious critical attitude; and initiates a century

which is in the main a century of calm, critical procedure. Not that he of himself gave a sudden turn to literary history, or was a sole innovator. The drift of things was in this direction when he began his career, and he had had forerunners like Waller and Denham; but it was he who gave the stamp of permanence to what had been before merely a tentative and hesitating tendency.

This was a very valuable service to perform, even if it resulted for a time in an overpruning of the luxuriance of poetic growth. It led to a more scrupulous regard for literary form, and to the development of a stricter literary conscience. Literary products were now brought to the test of certain standards of correct taste which criticism tried to formulate on the basis of a comparative study of ancient and modern literature, aided by the critical insight of Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, and other ancient masters, and of Corneille, St. Evremond, Bossu, Boileau, and the modern French school. Dryden's own work showed the happier consequences of this in its more scrupulous choice of diction, in a more varied accent and cadence, in an evenness and finish which had been wanting before his day. Up to his time, says Dr. Johnson, "the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. Dryden knew how to choose the flowing and sonorous words; to vary the pauses and adjust the accents; to

diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre."

It will not be easy for the young student, — or, for the sake of directness, let me say "for you," — to prove this for yourself, without going a little farther afield in your work than time or opportunity will permit. But if you will take any good volume of selections; if you will consult, for instance, George's excellent *Chaucer to Arnold* and read there the fragment from Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (p. 131), and Ben Jonson's lines to Shakespeare (p. 166); and if you will then pass at once to Dryden's mature work, say, to the lines from the Dedication of *Palamon and Arcite* given in the Appendix; — you will surely appreciate the new strength that knits Dryden's couplets, their smooth finish, and unembarrassed movement. And yet this does not mean that Dryden is a greater poet than either Marlowe or Jonson. There are strains in Marlowe (*e.g.* the scene beginning on p. 128 of George; or the song on pp. 130, 131) and in Jonson (*e.g.* the lines on p. 162; or the song on p. 163) which are quite beyond Dryden's compass for both height and depth of passion and imagination. What it does mean is that Dryden is a more exact and curious workman, who brings to his work better instruments of critical understanding than his predecessors brought. His higher finish, his sustained equality of craftsmanship, you will find in his

rendering of Chaucer: what you will not find is the inspired poetic insight, passion, and imagination which are present in Chaucer, along with his often rough and sometimes slipshod workmanship.

These workmanlike ways of Dryden, his conscious command of resources, his ingenuity, his good sense, his unflagging yet restrained energy, found scope no less in prose than in poetry. Apply a few tests here also. Turn to Mr. George's selections from Sidney (say p. 53: note, *e.g.* the sentences beginning on l. 11 or on l. 19), and Hooker (p. 105, especially ll. 15-22), and Jonson (pp. 169, 170, especially the opening sentences); and then pass on to the prose selection from Dryden (p. 209). You will find an obvious gain in clearness, and grace, and in the structure and arrangement of his sentences. If we take him at his best, this gain is still more obvious. The following paragraph, from the Dedication of one of his comedies, will both show this, and will enlarge our appreciation of Dryden's historical importance as "the puissant and glorious founder of our age of prose and reason" — to quote Arnold again.

Thus, my lord, the morning of your life was clear and calm; and though it was afterwards overcast, yet in that general storm you were never without a shelter. And now you are happily arrived to the evening of a day as serene as the dawn of it was glorious; but such an evening as I hope,



and almost prophesy, is far from night. 'Tis the evening of a summer's sun which keeps the daylight long within the skies. The health of your body is maintained by the vigour of your mind ; neither does the one shrink from the fatigue of exercise, nor the other bend under the pains of study. Methinks I behold in you another Caius Marius, who, in the extremity of his age, exercised himself almost every morning in the Campus Martius amongst the youthful nobility of Rome. And afterwards, in your retirements, when you do honour to poetry, by employing part of your leisure in it, I regard you as another Silius Italicus, who having passed over his consulship with applause, dismissed himself from business and from the gown, and employed his age amongst the shades in the reading and imitation of Virgil.

That is the prose of to-day, at its best; as far removed from the rich yet straggling and involved prose of his contemporary, Milton, as the mighty organ tones and harmonies of Milton's poetry are from the quieter piano tones of Dryden's. \

#### IV. HIS "PALAMON AND ARCITE"

Not a little of the interest attaching to *Palamon and Arcite* is due to the unique opportunity we get of comparing the manners of two great English poets. Dryden attempts in this work something more than to make Chaucer intelligible, by getting rid of his

obsolete inflections and syntax, and his archaic diction: he attempts to make him over to suit the taste of his time; and, despite his reverence for Chaucer, he tricks him out with a generous allowance of well-starched ruffles, and gaudy bows and trinkets, to satisfy his audience's love of finery. It is as if one should attempt to transform an early Gothic building, so free and fanciful in its seemingly unpremeditated effects, to the studied formalism—charming in its way, too,—of the neo-classic style with its rococo adornments. The transformation, when it is in the hands of a master like Dryden, is interesting and instructive. If we begin—as, of course, we shall—by studying Dryden's poem, and becoming familiar with it as a whole and in its parts,—say, as we might get to know a cathedral, with all its lady-chapels and niches and cloisters,—we shall come to feel an eager curiosity as to what the building which speaks to us here and there, both in its broad structural effects and in its small unchanged details, really was as it originally stood. And we shall turn to it the more eagerly when we are assured that, attractive as the “improved” structure is, the original was even more so. Thus it is, then, that Dryden, the skilful adapter, although he is greatly worth knowing, on his own account, acquires additional value because through him we may become acquainted with Chaucer, the

first builder of this fair structure on English soil.

You will begin, then, by putting Chaucer out of mind, and enjoying *Palamon and Arcite* on its merits. The story is a good one, full of quick movement and glowing color: the mingled hues of the god-haunted Hellenic and the chivalrous mediæval worlds; colors of sunlight and shadow, joy and anguish, beauty and ruin. A friendship between two youths, suddenly turned to bitter enmity by the appearance of a beautiful maiden whom they both love at first sight, and strive for to the death,—that is the theme; but it is elaborated with great richness of minor incident, so varied and changeful that it must needs appeal to every taste. Picture follows picture in rapid succession: valiant, imperial Theseus spreading his royal banner in the wind as he leads to victory his host, the flower of Grecian chivalry; fair Emily, “fairer than the lily,” who queens it over the cheerful May, and sings her May-day carol “like an angel”; the two gracious youths in prison, suddenly smitten with a fatal love that brings sharpest pain with its sweetness; their angry meeting and grim combat in the woods; the magnificence of Theseus’ provision for the public combat that is to decide their fate; the matchless shrines of Venus and Mars and Diana; the dazzling pageantry of the combatants’ procession, and of the

scene at the lists ; the dying victor, pathetically reconciled to his more fortunate brother-in-arms ; the funeral pomp, and the final blissful union of Palamon and Emily, — all these, and more, are unfolded to us. Who will follow them without keen interest and deep delight ?

The poem was written to give pleasure, and we must first of all read it with a relish for the pure pleasure of it. Choose a happy moment and a cozy corner, and taste the whole bitter-sweet of it. Forget that you con a text-book ; forget that there are notes, and an introduction, with recitations to follow ; and try to lose yourself in the tale. Recall old England, and that leisurely journey of knight, squire, miller, parson, monk, nun, and the rest, to famous Canterbury ; and listen to the veritable accents of the gallant knight as he tells his story of love and war.

In this first reading you will have missed much of the beauty and significance of the poem. Some words and allusions and constructions you will, no doubt, have failed to understand. You must aim now at a deeper appreciation of it ; and here the notes will help you. Have by you, if you can, a good English Dictionary and a Classical Dictionary, and, if you have read Chaucer, a copy of his *Knight's Tale* (the small Clarendon Press edition is handy). Keep within reach, too, those English classics you have read, and especially the vol-

umes required for entrance to college. You will find some allusion to these in the notes, and it is very desirable that you should use the knowledge gained through them to help you in reading Dryden; besides, there is great enjoyment in recognizing as former friends special words and allusions, thoughts, and sentiments which challenge and move you as you read.

Your aim will be, of course, not merely to understand the lines, but to feel them, to respond to their beauty. That is what you are to look for, beauty; if you miss that, you miss the supreme thing. Many of the notes aim to help you in this search, and to draw your attention to certain beauties you may overlook. And you will find nothing more helpful as a means to this end than frequent comparison of Dryden's lines with Chaucer's. The beauty of a thing is often strikingly, startlingly, brought home to us, by comparing it with something of the same kind that is higher or lower in the scale of beauty than it. The beauty of Dryden may sometimes pale before the more glorious beauty of Chaucer; sometimes it will appear as beauty of a different kind—just as there is one beauty of the sun and another beauty of the moon. The comparison ought to open your eyes and hearts to many things; it ought to form and refine your taste; it ought to yield a deeper delight in the beauties of style,

of musical speech and suggestive imagery, of noble emotion, of true thought.

Especially the music of verse ought to be a continual delight to you, and to enjoy that music fully you ought to read the verse aloud. Make a habit of this, remembering that poetry is meant to charm through the ear. Read aloud to yourself as well as you can, quite apart from class reading, all the passages that strike you. Memorize the best of these, and try to bring out all their sweetness and power in declamation. The poem lends itself to this vocal rendering. After awhile you will begin to appreciate the special effects of the couplet form; the steady tread of the iambus — each couplet an orderly, almost stately, step forward in the narrative; the pace quickening at times as the passion gathers, then slowing down to its normal speed again.

In this way you will come to appreciate the charm of variety in Dryden's skilful changes in the pauses and in the feet. To take an example, note how effective is the change in the first foot from an iambus to a trochee, how expressive the change of emphasis, in such a line as this (I., 182) in the course of the beautiful description of Emily:—

$\overset{\frown}{\text{Fresh}} \text{ as } | \overset{\frown}{\text{the}} \text{ } \overline{\text{month}} || \overset{\frown}{\text{and}} \text{ as } | \overset{\frown}{\text{the}} \text{ } \overline{\text{morn}} | \overset{\frown}{\text{ing}} \text{ } \overline{\text{fair}}.$

We feel the very breath of morning freshness sweep through the line.

Dryden further varies the verse occasionally by expanding the couplet into a triplet, and by lengthening his pentameter into a hexameter, or Alexandrine, as it is technically called. The following triplet (II., 560), concluding with an Alexandrine, illustrates both changes together:—

There saw I how the secret felon wrought,  
And treason labouring in the traitor's thought,  
And midwife Time the ripened plot to murder brought.

The effect, in spite of the unusual ellipses, is felicitous; for it carries the suggestion by the third line of a delayed closing of the thought, while we follow the still riveted gaze of the onlooker. Note also the emphasis on the opening "there," as of a pointed finger. This effect is repeated in the line which follows these three. Here it is, with three additional lines, which will illustrate well enough other varieties in the pauses:—

There the red Anger dared the pallid **Fear**;  
Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy leer,  
Soft, smiling, and demurely looking down,  
But hid the dagger underneath the gown.

In reading, we secure the right effects only by giving due emphasis to "next" in the second line, and by making significantly variable and leisurely pauses after each of the words and phrases separated by

commas. By reason of these and other changes akin to them, the poem never becomes monotonous; and the unfailing vigor of Dryden's masculine verse is an antidote to tediousness.

Occasionally, some of Dryden's elisions and slurred syllables trouble us. We must get accustomed to eliding the "e" in "the" before a vowel:—

Opposed to her, on the other side advance — II., 490.

All for the increase of arms, and love of chivalry; — III., 96.  
and to a similar, but less frequent, elision like this:—

To adorn with pagan rites the power armipotent.

Again, the following typical line calls for a slurring of the first two syllables of the word "tapestry."

Rich tapestry spread the streets, and flowers the posts adorn. —  
III., 104.

Then Dryden is often very free in his rhymes; as when "guests" rhymes with "feasts" (III., 115), and "pestilence" with "prince" (III., 412). But the pronunciation of Dryden's time made good rhymes of what are to us bad ones. Thus "draught" rhymed for the ear with "brought" (II., 18), "bow" with "now" (II., 231), "seas" with "sways" (III., 296), "shewed" (or "showed") with "strewed" (III., 589), "wound"



with "ground," "joy" with "sky," probably (II., 426).

Besides the interest in and enjoyment of the style or poetic art of the poem, is the interest in the characters and in the plot. Chaucer shows great mastery in both of these matters. Palamon ("the lion") and Arcite ("the tiger") have very distinct individualities, which the student of character will find it worth while to work out. Royal Theseus too is a well-realized personality; and so are such lightly drawn figures as those of the warriors, surly Lucurgus and fierce-eyed Emetrius. The plot is a triumph of Chaucer's practised, ripest skill—the skill of our most delightful and artful story-teller in verse. It is unnecessary to enter into a detailed discussion of these matters, as the most important questions that arise in connection with them are drawn attention to in the notes; and it is better that they should be taken up as they are raised by the text.

It is to be hoped that the reading of *Palamon and Arcite* will awaken in you a desire to know more of both Dryden and Chaucer. If it does, read first more of their poetry: Dryden's *Odes* and *Mac Flecknoe*, at least; and Chaucer's *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*,<sup>†</sup> at the very least. To fill out your knowledge of Dryden's life and times, read the essays by Dr. Johnson, Saintsbury (English Men of Letters Series), Lowell

(in part); and turn to Green's account of the period in his *History of the English People*. Chaucer you may come closer to by using Corson's selections from *The Canterbury Tales*. Lastly, it will be well to compare with Chaucer's epic treatment of his theme the dramatic treatment presented in the fine play, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in which the critics recognize some of Shakespeare's handiwork. Read these, if you can read them with relish, but not as distasteful task-work. Read to enjoy, read heartily; for only interest and delight will give the keys to that Kingdom of Enchantment which we call Literature.



# PALAMON AND ARCITE

## OR THE KNIGHT'S TALE

FROM CHAUCER

### IN THREE BOOKS

#### Book I

IN days of old there lived, of mighty fame,  
A valiant Prince,° and Theseus° was his name;  
A chief, who more in feats of arms excelled,  
The rising nor the setting sun beheld.  
Of Athens he was lord; much land he won, 5  
And added foreign countries to his crown.°  
In Scythia with the warrior Queen° he strove,  
Whom first by force he conquered, then by love;  
He brought in triumph back the beauteous dame,  
With whom her sister, fair Emilia, came. 10  
With honour to his home let Theseus ride,  
With Love to friend,° and Fortune for his guide,  
And his victorious army at his side.°

I° pass their warlike pomp, their proud array,  
Their shouts, their songs, their welcome on the way ; 15  
But, were it not too long, I would recite  
The feats of Amazons, the fatal fight  
Betwixt the hardy Queen and hero Knight ;  
The town besieged, and how much blood it cost  
The female army, and the Athenian host ; 20  
The spousals of Hippolyta the Queen ;  
What tilts and turneys at the feast were seen ;  
The storm at their return, the ladies' fear :  
But these and other things I must forbear.  
The field is spacious I design to sow° 25  
With oxen far unfit to draw the plough :  
The remnant of my tale is of a length  
To tire your patience, and to waste my strength ;  
And trivial accidents° shall be forborn,  
That others may have time to take their turn, 30  
As was at first enjoined us by mine host,  
That he, whose tale is best and pleases most,  
Should win his supper at our common cost.  
And therefore where I left, I will pursue  
This ancient story, whether false or true, 35  
In hope it may be mended with a new.°  
The Prince I mentioned, full of high renown,  
In this array drew near the Athenian town ;

When, in his pomp and utmost of his pride  
Marching, he chanced to cast his eye aside,<sup>o</sup> 40  
And saw a quire<sup>o</sup> of mourning dames, who lay  
By two and two across the common way:  
At his approach they raised a rueful cry,  
And beat their breasts, and held their hands on high,  
Creeping and crying, till they seized at last<sup>o</sup> 45  
His courser's bridle and his feet embraced.<sup>o</sup>  
"Tell me," said Theseus, "what and whence you are,  
And why this funeral pageant you prepare?  
Is this the welcome of my worthy deeds,  
To meet my triumph<sup>o</sup> in ill-omened weeds?" 50  
Or envy you my praise, and would destroy  
With grief my pleasures, and pollute my joy?  
Or are you injured, and demand relief?  
Name your request, and I will ease your grief."  
The most in years of all the mourning train 55  
Began; but swounded<sup>o</sup> first away for pain;  
Then scarce recovered spoke: "Nor envy we  
Thy great renown, nor grudge thy victory;  
'Tis thine, O King, the afflicted to redress,  
And fame has filled the world with thy success: 60  
We wretched women sue for that alone,  
Which of thy goodness is refused to none;  
Let fall some drops of pity on our grief,

If what we beg be just, and we deserve relief ; °  
For none of us, who now thy grace implore, 65  
But held the rank of sovereign queen before ;  
Till, thanks to giddy Chance, which never bears  
That mortal bliss should last for length of years,  
She cast us headlong from our high estate,  
And here in hope of thy return we wait, 70  
And long have waited in the temple nigh,  
Built to the gracious goddess Clemency.  
But reverence thou the power whose name it bears,  
Relieve the oppressed, and wipe the widows' tears.  
I, wretched I, have other fortune seen, 75  
The wife of Capaneus, ° and once a Queen ;  
At Thebes he fell ; cursed be the fatal day !  
And all the rest thou seest in this array  
To make their moan their lords in battle lost,  
Before that town besieged by our confederate host. 80  
But Creon, old and impious, who commands  
The Theban city, and usurps the lands,  
Denies the rites of funeral fires to those  
Whose breathless bodies yet he calls his foes.  
Unburned, unburied, on a heap they lie ; ° 85  
Such is their fate, and such his tyranny ;  
No friend has leave to bear away the dead,  
But with their lifeless limbs his hounds are fed."

At this she shrieked aloud ; the mournful train  
Echoed her grief, and grovelling on the plain, 90  
With groans, and hands upheld, to move his mind,  
Besought his pity to their helpless kind.

The Prince was touched, his tears began to flow,  
And, as<sup>o</sup> his tender heart would break in two,  
He sighed ; and could not but their fate deplore, 95  
So wretched now, so fortunate before.

Then lightly from his lofty steed he flew,  
And raising one by one the suppliant crew,<sup>o</sup>  
To comfort each, full solemnly he swore,  
That by the faith which knights to knighthood bore, 100  
And whate'er else to chivalry belongs,  
He would not cease, till he revenged their wrongs ;  
That Greece should see performed what he declared,  
And cruel Creon find his just reward.

He said no more, but shunning all delay 105  
Rode on, nor entered Athens on his way ;  
But left his sister and his queen behind,  
And waved his royal banner in the wind,<sup>o</sup>  
Where in an argent field<sup>o</sup> the God of War  
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car ;<sup>o</sup> 110  
Red was his sword, and shield, and whole attire,  
And all the godhead seemed to glow with fire ;  
Even the ground glittered where the standard flew,



And the green grass was dyed to sanguine hue.  
High on his pointed lance his pennon<sup>o</sup> bore 115  
His Cretan fight, the conquered Minotaur:  
The soldiers shout around with generous rage,<sup>o</sup>  
And in that victory their own presage.  
He praised their ardour, inly pleased to see  
His host, the flower of Grecian chivalry. 120  
All day he marched, and all the ensuing night,  
And saw the city with returning light.  
The process<sup>o</sup> of the war I need not tell,  
How Theseus conquered, and how Creon fell;  
Or after, how by storm the walls were won, 125  
Or how the victor sacked and burned the town;  
How to the ladies he restored again  
The bodies of their lords in battle slain;  
And with what ancient rites they were interred;  
All these to fitter time shall be deferred: 130  
I spare<sup>o</sup> the widows' tears, their woful cries,  
And howling<sup>o</sup> at their husbands' obsequies;  
How Theseus at these funerals did assist,  
And with what gifts the mourning dames dismissed.  
Thus when the victor chief had Creon slain, 135  
And conquered Thebes, he pitched upon the plain  
His mighty camp, and when the day returned,  
The country wasted and the hamlets burned,

And left the pillagers, to rapine bred,  
Without control to strip and spoil the dead. 140

There, in a heap of slain, among the rest  
Two youthful knights they found beneath a load op-  
pressed

Of slaughtered foes, whom first to death they sent,<sup>o</sup>  
The trophies of their strength, a bloody monument.  
Both fair, and both of royal blood they seemed, 145  
Whom kinsmen to the crown the heralds deemed;  
That day in equal arms<sup>o</sup> they fought for fame;  
Their swords, their shields, their surcoats were the  
same:

Close by each other laid they pressed the ground,  
Their manly bosoms pierced with many a grisly  
wound;<sup>o</sup> 150

Nor well alive nor wholly dead they were,  
But some faint signs of feeble life appear;  
The wandering breath was on the wing to part,  
Weak was the pulse, and hardly heaved the heart.  
These two were sisters' sons; and Arcite one, 155  
Much famed in fields, with valiant Palamon.  
From these their costly arms the spoilers rent,  
And softly<sup>o</sup> both conveyed to Theseus' tent:  
Whom, known of Creon's line<sup>o</sup> and cured with care,  
He to his city sent as prisoners of the war; 160

Hopeless of ransom, and condemned to lie  
In durance, doomed a lingering death to die.

This done, he marched away with warlike sound,  
And to his Athens turned with laurels crowned,  
Where happy long he lived, much loved, and more  
renowned. 165

But in a tower, and never to be loosed,  
The woful captive kinsmen are enclosed.

Thus year by year they pass, and day by day,  
Till once ('twas on the morn of cheerful May°)  
The young Emilia, fairer to be seen 170  
Than the fair lily on the flowery green,  
More fresh than May herself in blossoms new,  
(For with the rosy colour strove her hue,)  
Waked, as her custom was, before the day,  
To do the observance due to sprightly May; 175  
For sprightly May commands our youth to keep  
The vigils of her night, and breaks their sluggard  
sleep;°

Each gentle breast with kindly warmth she moves;  
Inspires new flames, revives extinguished loves.  
In this remembrance Emily ere day 180  
Arose, and dressed herself in rich array;  
Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair,  
Adown her shoulders fell her length of hair:

A ribband did the braided tresses bind,  
The rest was loose, and wantoned in the wind: 185  
Aurora had but newly chased the night,  
And purpled o'er the sky with blushing light,  
When to the garden-walk she took her way,  
To sport and trip along in cool of day,  
And offer maiden vows in honour of the May. 190

At every turn she made a little stand,  
And thrust among the thorns her lily hand  
To draw the rose; and every rose she drew,  
She shook the stalk, and brushed away the dew;  
Then party-coloured flowers of white and red 195  
She wove, to make a garland for her head:  
This done, she sung and carolled out so clear,  
That men and angels might rejoice to hear;  
Even wondering Philomel forgot to sing,  
And learned from her to welcome in the spring. 200  
The tower, of which before was mention made,  
Within whose keep the captive knights were laid,  
Built of a large extent, and strong withal,  
Was one partition of the palace wall; °  
The garden was enclosed within the square, 205  
Where young Emilia took the morning air.

It happened Palamon, the prisoner knight,  
Restless for woe, arose before the light,

And with his jailor's leave desired to breathe  
An air more wholesome than the damps beneath. 210  
This granted, to the tower he took his way,  
Cheered with the promise of a glorious day;  
Then cast a languishing regard around,  
And saw with hateful° eyes the temples crowned  
With golden spires,° and all the hostile ground. 215  
He sighed, and turned his eyes, because he knew  
'Twas but a larger jail he had in view;  
Then looked below, and from the castle's height  
Beheld a nearer and more pleasing sight;  
The garden, which before he had not seen, 220  
In spring's new livery clad of white and green,  
Fresh flowers in wide parterres, and shady walks  
between.

This viewed, but not enjoyed, with arms across  
He stood, reflecting on his country's loss;  
Himself an object of the public scorn, 225  
And often wished he never had been born.  
At last (for so his destiny required),  
With walking giddy, and with thinking tired,  
He through a little window cast his sight,  
Though thick of bars, that gave a scanty light; 230  
But even that glimmering served him to descry  
The inevitable° charms of Emily.

Scarce had he seen, but, seized with sudden smart,<sup>o</sup>  
Stung to the quick, he felt it at his heart;  
Struck blind with overpowering light he stood, 235  
Then started back amazed, and cried aloud.

Young Arcite heard; and up he ran with haste,  
To help his friend, and in his arms embraced;  
And asked him why he looked so deadly wan,  
And whence, and how, his change of cheer<sup>o</sup> began? 240  
Or who had done the offence? "But if," said he,  
"Your grief alone<sup>o</sup> is hard captivity,  
For love of Heaven with patience undergo  
A cureless ill, since Fate will have it so:  
So stood our horoscope<sup>o</sup> in chains to lie, 245  
And Saturn in the dungeon of the sky,  
Or other baleful aspect, ruled our birth,  
When all the friendly stars were under earth;<sup>o</sup>  
Whate'er betides, by Destiny 'tis done;  
And better bear like men than vainly seek to shun." 250  
"Nor of my bonds," said Palamon again,  
"Nor of unhappy planets I complain;  
But when my mortal anguish caused my cry,  
The moment I was hurt through either eye;  
Pierced with a random shaft, I faint away, 255  
And perish with insensible<sup>o</sup> decay:  
A glance of some new goddess gave the wound,

Whom, like Actæon,<sup>o</sup> unaware I found.  
Look how she walks along yon shady space;  
Not Juno<sup>o</sup> moves with more majestic grace, 260  
And all the Cyprian queen<sup>o</sup> is in her face.  
If thou art Venus (for thy charms confess<sup>o</sup>  
That face was formed in heaven), nor art thou less,  
Disguised in habit,<sup>o</sup> undisguised in shape,  
O help us captives from our chains to scape ! 265  
But if our doom be past in bonds to lie  
For life, and in a loathsome dungeon die,  
Then be thy wrath appeased with our disgrace,  
And show compassion to the Theban race,  
Oppressed by tyrant power !" — While yet he spoke, 270  
Arcite on Emily had fixed his look ;  
The fatal dart a ready passage found<sup>o</sup>  
And deep within his heart infix'd the wound :  
So that if Palamon were wounded sore,  
Arcite was hurt as much as he or more : 275  
Then from his inmost soul he sighed, and said,  
"The beauty I behold has struck me dead :  
Unknowingly she strikes, and kills by chance ;  
Poison is in her eyes, and death in every glance.  
Oh, I must ask ; nor ask alone, but move 280  
Her mind to mercy, or must die for love."

Thus Arcite : and thus Palamon replies

(Eager his tone, and ardent were his eyes,)  
“Speakst thou in earnest, or in jesting vein?”  
“Jesting,” said Arcite, “suits but ill with pain.” 285  
“It suits far worse,” (said Palamon again,  
And bent his brows,) “with men who honour weigh,  
Their faith to break, their friendship to betray;  
But worst with thee, of noble lineage born,  
My kinsman, and in arms my brother sworn. 290  
Have we not plighted each our holy oath,  
That one should be the common good of both;  
One soul should both inspire, and neither prove  
His fellow’s hindrance in pursuit of love?  
To this before the Gods we gave our hands, 295  
And nothing but our death can break the bands.  
This binds thee, then, to farther my design,  
As I am bound by vow to farther thine:  
Nor canst, nor darest thou, traitor, on the plain<sup>o</sup>  
Appeach<sup>o</sup> my honour, or thy own maintain, 300  
Since thou art of my council,<sup>o</sup> and the friend  
Whose faith I trust, and on whose care depend.  
And wouldst thou court my lady’s love, which I  
Much rather than release, would choose to die?  
But thou, false Arcite, never shalt obtain, 305  
Thy bad pretence;<sup>o</sup> I told thee first my pain:  
For first my love began ere thine was born;



Thou as my council, and my brother sworn,  
Art bound to assist my eldership<sup>o</sup> of right,  
Or justly to be deemed a perjured knight.” 310

Thus Palamon: but Arcite with disdain  
In haughty language thus replied again:  
“Forsworn thyself: the traitor’s odious name  
I first return, and then disprove thy claim.  
If love be passion, and that passion nurst<sup>o</sup> 315  
With strong desires, I loved the lady first.  
Canst thou pretend desire, whom zeal inflamed  
To worship, and a power celestial named?  
Thine was devotion to the blest above,  
I saw the woman, and desired her love;<sup>o</sup> 320  
First owned my passion, and to thee commend  
The important secret, as my chosen friend.  
Suppose (which yet I grant not) thy desire  
A moment elder than my rival fire;  
Can chance of seeing first thy title prove? 325  
And knowst thou not, no law is made for love?  
Law is to things which to free choice relate;<sup>o</sup>  
Love is not in our choice, but in our fate;  
Laws are not positive; love’s power we see  
Is Nature’s sanction, and her first decree. 330  
Each day we break the bond of human laws  
For love, and vindicate the common cause.

Laws for defence of civil rights are placed,  
Love throws the fences down, and makes a general  
waste.

Maids, widows, wives without distinction fall; 335  
The sweeping deluge, love, comes on and covers all.

If then the laws of friendship I transgress,  
I keep the greater, while I break the less;  
And both are mad alike, since neither can possess.

Both hopeless to be ransomed, never more 340  
To see the sun, but as he passes o'er.

Like Æsop's hounds<sup>o</sup> contending for the bone,  
Each pleaded right, and would be lord alone;

The fruitless fight continued all the day,  
A cur came by and snatched the prize away. 345

As courtiers therefore juggle for a grant,<sup>o</sup>  
And when they break their friendship, plead their  
want,

So thou, if Fortune will thy suit advance,  
Love on, nor envy me my equal chance:  
For I must love, and am resolved to try 350  
My fate, or failing in the adventure<sup>o</sup> die."

Great was their strife, which hourly was renewed,  
Till each with mortal hate his rival viewed:  
Now friends no more, nor walking hand in hand;<sup>o</sup>  
But when they met, they made a surly stand, 355

And glared like angry lions as they passed,  
And wished that every look might be their last.

It chanced at length, Pirithous came to attend°  
This worthy Theseus, his familiar friend :  
Their love in early infancy began, 360  
And rose as childhood ripened into man,  
Companions of the war ; and loved so well,  
That when one died, as ancient stories tell,  
His fellow to redeem him went to hell.

But to pursue my tale : to welcome home 365  
His warlike brother is Pirithous come :  
Arcite of Thebes was known in arms long since,  
And honoured by this young Thessalian prince.  
Theseus, to gratify his friend and guest,  
Who made our Arcite's freedom his request, 370  
Restored to liberty the captive knight,  
But on these hard conditions I recite :  
That if hereafter Arcite should be found  
Within the compass of Athenian ground,  
By day or night, or on whate'er pretence, 375  
His head should pay the forfeit of the offence.  
To this Pirithous for his friend agreed,  
And on his promise was the prisoner freed.

Unpleased and pensive hence he takes his way,  
At his own peril ; for his life must pay.° 380

Who now but Arcite mourns his bitter fate,  
Finds his dear purchase,<sup>o</sup> and repents too late ?  
“What have I gained,” he said, “in prison pent,<sup>o</sup>  
If I but change my bonds for banishment ?  
And banished from her sight, I suffer more 385  
In freedom than I felt in bonds before ;  
Forced from her presence and condemned to live,  
Unwelcome freedom and unthanked reprieve :  
Heaven is not but where Emily abides,<sup>o</sup>  
And where she’s absent, all is hell besides. 390  
Next to my day of birth, was that accurst  
Which bound my friendship to Pirithous first :  
Had I not known that prince, I still had been  
In bondage, and had still Emilia seen :  
For though I never can her grace deserve, 395  
’Tis recompense enough to see and serve.  
O Palamon, my kinsman and my friend,  
How much more happy fates thy love attend !  
Thine is the adventure, thine the victory,  
Well has thy fortune turned the dice for thee : 400  
Thou on that angel’s face mayest feed thy eyes,  
In prison, no ; but blissful paradise !  
Thou daily seest that sun of beauty shine,  
And lovest at least in love’s extremest line.<sup>o</sup>  
I mourn in absence, love’s eternal night ; 405

And who can tell but since thou hast her sight,  
And art a comely, young, and valiant knight,  
Fortune (a various power) may cease to frown,  
And by some ways unknown thy wishes crown?  
But I, the most forlorn of human kind, 410  
Nor help can hope nor remedy can find;  
But doomed to drag my loathsome life in care,<sup>o</sup>  
For my reward, must end it in despair.

Fire, water, air, and earth, and force of fates  
That governs all, and Heaven that all creates, 415  
Nor art, nor<sup>o</sup> Nature's hand can ease my grief;  
Nothing but death, the wretch's last relief:  
Then farewell youth, and all the joys that dwell  
With youth and life, and life itself, farewell!

"But why, alas! do mortal men in vain<sup>o</sup> 420  
Of Fortune, Fate, or Providence complain?  
God gives us what he knows our wants require,  
And better things than those which we desire:  
Some pray for riches; riches they obtain;  
But, watched by robbers, for their wealth are slain; 425  
Some pray from prison to be freed; and come,  
When guilty of their vows,<sup>o</sup> to fall at home;  
Murdered by those they trusted with their life,  
A favoured servant or a bosom wife.  
Such dear-bought blessings happen every day, 430

Because we know not for what things to pray.  
Like drunken sots about the streets we roam :  
Well knows the sot he has a certain home,  
Yet knows not how to find the uncertain place,  
And blunders on, and staggers every pace. 435  
Thus all seek happiness ; but few can find,  
For far the greater part of men are blind.  
This is my case, who thought our utmost good  
Was in one word of freedom understood :  
The fatal blessing came : from prison free, 440  
I starve° abroad, and lose the sight of Emily."

Thus Arcite : but if Arcite thus deplore  
His sufferings, Palamon yet suffers more.  
For when he knew° his rival freed and gone,  
He swells with wrath ; he makes outrageous moan ;° 445  
He frets, he fumes, he stares, he stamps the ground ;  
The hollow tower with clamours rings around :°  
With briny tears he bathed his fettered feet,  
And dropped all o'er with agony of sweat.  
" Alas !" he cried, " I, wretch, in prison pine, 450  
Too happy rival, while the fruit is thine :  
Thou livest at large, thou drawest thy native air,  
Pleased with thy freedom, proud of° my despair :  
Thou mayest, since thou hast youth and courage joined,  
A sweet behaviour and a solid mind, 455

Assemble ours, and all the Theban race,  
To vindicate° on Athens thy disgrace;  
And after (by some treaty made) possess  
Fair Emily, the pledge of lasting peace.°  
So thine shall be the beauteous prize, while I 460  
Must languish in despair, in prison die.  
Thus all the advantage of the strife is thine,  
Thy portion double joys, and double sorrows mine.”

The rage of jealousy then fired his soul,°  
And his face kindled like a burning coal: 465  
Now cold despair, succeeding in her stead,  
To livid paleness turns the glowing red.  
His blood, scarce liquid, creeps within his veins,  
Like water which the freezing wind constrains.°  
Then thus he said: “Eternal Deities, 470  
Who rule the world with absolute decrees,  
And write whatever time shall bring to pass  
With pens of adamant on plates of brass;  
What is° the race of human kind your care  
Beyond what all his° fellow-creatures are? 475  
He with the rest is liable to pain,  
And like the sheep, his brother-beast, is slain.  
Cold, hunger, prisons, ills without a cure,  
All these he must, and guiltless oft, endure;  
Or does your justice, power, or prescience fail, 480

When the good suffer and the bad prevail ?  
What worse to wretched virtue could befall,  
If Fate or giddy Fortune governed all ?  
Nay, worse than other beasts is our estate : °  
Them, to pursue their pleasures, you create ; ° 485  
We, bound by harder laws, must curb our will,  
And your commands, not our desires, fulfil :  
Then, when the creature is unjustly slain,  
Yet, after death at least, he feels no pain ;  
But man in life surcharged with woe before, 490  
Not freed when dead, is doomed to suffer more.  
A serpent shoots his sting at ° unaware ;  
An ambushed thief forelays ° a traveller ;  
The man lies murdered, while the thief and snake,  
One gains the thickets, and one thrids ° the brake. 495  
This let divines decide ; but well I know,  
Just or unjust, I have my share of woe :  
Through Saturn ° seated in a luckless place,  
And Juno's wrath that persecutes my race ; °  
Or Mars and Venus in a quartil ° move 500  
My pangs of jealousy for Arcite's love."

Let Palamon oppressed in bondage mourn,  
While to his exiled rival we return.  
By this the sun, declining from his height,  
The day had shortened to prolong the night : 505



The lengthened night gave length of misery,  
Both to the captive lover and the free :  
For Palamon in endless prison mourns,  
And Arcite forfeits life if he returns ;  
The banished never hopes his love to see, 510  
Nor hopes the captive lord his liberty.  
'Tis hard to say who suffers greater pains ;  
One sees his love, but cannot break his chains ;  
One free, and all his motions uncontrolled,  
Beholds whate'er he would but° what he would behold.  
Judge as you please, for I will haste to tell 516  
What fortune to the banished knight befel.  
When Arcite was to Thebes returned again,°  
The loss of her he loved renewed his pain ;  
What could be worse than never more to see 520  
His life, his soul, his charming Emily ?  
He raved with all the madness of despair,  
He roared, he beat his breast, he tore his hair.  
Dry sorrow in his stupid° eyes appears,  
For wanting nourishment, he wanted tears ; 525  
His eyeballs in their hollow sockets sink,  
Bereft of sleep ; he loathes his meat and drink ;  
He withers at his heart, and looks as wan  
As the pale spectre of a murdered man :  
That pale turns yellow, and his face receives° 530

The faded hue of sapless boxen° leaves;  
In solitary groves he makes his moan,  
Walks early out, and ever is alone;  
Nor, mixed in mirth, in youthful pleasure shares,  
But sighs when songs and instruments he hears.° 535  
His spirits are so low, his voice is drowned,  
He hears as from afar, or in a swoond,  
Like the deaf murmurs of a distant sound:  
Uncombed his locks, and squalid his attire,  
Unlike the trim° of love and gay desire; 540  
But full of museful° mopings, which presage  
The loss of reason and conclude in rage.°

This when he had endured a year and more,  
Now wholly changed from what he was before,  
It happened once, that, slumbering as he lay, 545  
He dreamt (his dream began at break of day)  
That Hermes° o'er his head in air appeared,  
And with soft words his drooping spirits cheered;  
His hat adorned with wings disclosed the god,  
And in his hand he bore the sleep-compelling rod; 550  
Such as he seemed, when, at his sire's command,  
On Argus' head he laid the snaky wand.  
"Arise," he said, "to conquering Athens go;  
There Fate appoints an end of all thy woe."  
The fright awakened Arcite with a start, 555

Against his bosom bounced his heaving heart;  
But soon he said, with scarce recovered breath,  
“And thither will I go to meet my death,<sup>o</sup>  
Sure to be slain; but death is my desire,  
Since in Emilia’s sight I shall expire.” 560  
By chance he spied a mirror while he spoke,  
And gazing there beheld his altered look;  
Wondering, he saw his features and his hue  
So much were changed, that scarce himself he knew.  
A sudden thought then starting in his mind, 565  
“Since I in Arcite cannot Arcite find,  
The world may search in vain with all their eyes,  
But never penetrate through this disguise.  
Thanks to the change which grief and sickness give,  
In low estate I may securely live, 570  
And see, unknown, my mistress day by day.”  
He said, and clothed himself in coarse array,  
A labouring hind in show; then forth he went,  
And to the Athenian towers his journey bent:  
One squire attended in the same disguise, 575  
Made conscious<sup>o</sup> of his master’s enterprise.  
Arrived at Athens, soon he came to court,  
Unknown, unquestioned in that thick resort:<sup>o</sup>  
Proffering for hire his service at the gate,<sup>o</sup>  
To drudge, draw water, and to run or wait. 580

So fair befel him, that for little gain  
He served at first Emilia's chamberlain;  
And, watchful all advantages to spy,  
Was still<sup>o</sup> at hand, and in his master's eye;  
And as his bones were big, and sinews strong, 585  
Refused no toil that could to slaves belong;  
But from deep wells with engines<sup>o</sup> water drew,  
And used his noble hands the wood to hew.  
He passed a year at least attending thus  
On Emily, and called Philostratus.<sup>o</sup> 590  
But never was there man of his degree  
So much esteemed, so well beloved as he.  
So gentle of condition<sup>o</sup> was he known,  
That through the court his courtesy was blown:  
All think him worthy of a greater place, 595  
And recommend him to the royal grace;  
That exercised within a higher sphere,  
His virtues more conspicuous might appear.  
Thus by the general voice was Arcite praised,  
And by great Theseus to high favour raised; 600  
Among his menial<sup>o</sup> servants first<sup>o</sup> enrolled,  
And largely entertained<sup>o</sup> with sums of gold:  
Besides what secretly from Thebes was sent,  
Of his own income and his annual rent. 604  
This well employed, he purchased friends and fame,

But cautiously concealed from whence it came.  
Thus for three years he lived with large increase°  
In arms of honour, and esteem in peace ;  
To Theseus' person he was ever near,  
And Theseus for his virtues held him dear. 610

## Book II

WHILE Arcite lives in bliss, the story turns  
Where hopeless Palamon in prison mourns.  
For six long years immured, the captive knight  
Had dragged his chains, and scarcely seen the light :  
Lost liberty and love at once he bore ; 5  
His prison pained him much, his passion more :  
Nor dares he hope his fetters to remove,  
Nor ever wishes to be free from love.

But when the sixth revolving year was run,  
And May within the Twins received the sun,° 10  
Were it by Chance, or forceful Destiny,  
Which forms in causes first whate'er shall be,°  
Assisted by a friend one moonless night,  
This Palamon from prison took his flight :  
A pleasant beverage he prepared before 15  
Of wine and honey mixed, with added store  
Of opium ; to his keeper this he brought,

Who swallowed unaware the sleepy draught,<sup>o</sup>  
And snored secure<sup>o</sup> till morn, his senses bound  
In slumber, and in long oblivion drowned. 20  
Short was the night, and careful Palamon  
Sought the next<sup>o</sup> covert ere the rising sun.  
A thick-spread forest near the city lay,  
To this with lengthened strides he took his way,  
(For far he could not fly, and feared the day.<sup>o</sup>) 25  
Safe from pursuit, he meant to shun the light,  
Till the brown shadows of the friendly night  
To Thebes might favour his intended flight.<sup>o</sup>  
•When to his country come, his next design  
Was all the Theban race in arms to join, 30  
And war on Theseus, till he lost his life,  
Or won the beauteous Emily to wife.  
Thus while his thoughts the lingering day beguile,  
To gentle Arcite let us turn our style;<sup>o</sup>  
Who little dreamt how nigh he was to care, 35  
Till treacherous fortune caught him in the snare.  
The morning-lark, the messenger of day,<sup>o</sup>  
Saluted in her song the morning gray;  
And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,  
That all the horizon laughed to see the joyous sight; 40  
He with his tepid rays the rose renews,  
And licks the dropping leaves, and dries the dews;

When Arcite left his bed, resolved to pay  
Observance to the month of merry May,  
Forth on his fiery steed betimes he rode, 45  
That scarcely prints the turf on which he trod :  
At ease he seemed, and prancing o'er the plains,  
Turned only to the grove his horse's reins,  
The grove I named before, and, lighting there,  
A woodbine garland sought to crown his hair ; 50  
Then turned his face against° the rising day,  
And raised his voice to welcome in the May :

“For thee, sweet month, the groves green liveries  
wear,°

If not the first, the fairest of the year :  
For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours, 55  
And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers :  
When thy short reign is past, the feverish sun  
The sultry tropic° fears, and moves more slowly on.  
So may thy tender blossoms fear no blight,  
Nor goats with venom'd teeth thy tendrils bite, 60  
As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find  
The fragrant greens I seek, my brows to bind.”

His vows addressed,° within the grove he strayed,  
Till Fate or Fortune near the place conveyed  
His steps where secret Palamon° was laid. 65  
Full little thought of him the gentle knight,

Who flying death had there concealed his flight,  
In brakes and brambles hid, and shunning mortal  
sight;

And less he knew him for his hated foe,  
But feared him as a man he did not know. 7

But as it has been said of ancient years,  
That fields are full of eyes and woods have ears,  
For this the wise are ever on their guard,°

For unforeseen, they say, is unprepared.  
Uncautious Arcite thought himself alone, 7

And less than all suspected Palamon,  
Who, listening, heard him, while he searched the grove  
And loudly sung his roundelay of love:

But on the sudden stopped, and silent stood,  
(As lovers often muse, and change their mood;) 8

Now high as heaven, and then as low as hell,

Now up, now down, as buckets in a well:

For Venus, like her day, will change her cheer,  
And seldom shall we see a Friday° clear.

Thus Arcite, having sung, with altered hue 8  
Sunk on the ground, and from his bosom drew

A desperate sigh, accusing Heaven and Fate,  
And angry Juno's° unrelenting hate:

"Cursed be the day when first I did appear;  
Let it be blotted from the calendar, 9



Lest it pollute the month, and poison all the year.

Still will the jealous Queen pursue our race ?

Cadmus is dead, the Theban city was : °

Yet ceases not her hate ; for all who come  
From Cadmus are involved in Cadmus' doom.

95

I suffer for my blood : unjust decree,

That punishes another's crime on me.

In mean estate I serve my mortal foe,

The man who caused my country's overthrow.

This is not all ; for Juno, to my shame,

100

Has forced me to forsake my former name ;

Arcite I was, Philostratus I am.

That side of heaven ° is all my enemy :

Mars ruined Thebes ; his mother ruined me.

Of all the royal race remains but one

105

Besides myself, the unhappy Palamon,

Whom Theseus holds in bonds and will not free ;

Without a crime, except his kin to me.

Yet these and all the rest I could endure ;

But love's a malady without a cure :

110

Fierce Love has pierced me with his fiery dart,

He fries ° within, and hisses at my heart.

Your eyes, fair Emily, my fate pursue ; °

I suffer for the rest, ° I die for you.

Of such a goddess no time leaves record, °

115

Who burned the temple where she was adored :  
And let it burn, I never will complain,  
Pleased with my sufferings, if you knew my pain."

At this a sickly qualm his heart assailed,<sup>o</sup>  
His ears ring inward, and his senses failed.<sup>o</sup> 12  
No word missed Palamon of all he spoke ;  
But soon to deadly pale he changed his look :  
He trembled every limb, and felt a smart,  
As if cold steel had glided through his heart ;  
Nor longer stayed, but starting from his place, 12  
Discovered stood, and showed his hostile face :

"False traitor, Arcite, traitor to thy blood,  
Bound by thy sacred oath to seek my good,  
Now art thou found forsworn for Emily,  
And darest attempt her love, for whom I die. 13  
So hast thou cheated Theseus with a wile,  
Against thy vow, returning to beguile  
Under a borrowed name : as false to me,  
So false thou art to him who set thee free.  
But rest assured, that either thou shalt die, 13  
Or else renounce thy claim in Emily ;  
For though unarmed I am, and, freed by chance,  
Am here without my sword or pointed lance,  
Hope not, base man, unquestioned hence to go,  
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe." 14

Arcite, who heard his tale and knew<sup>o</sup> the man,  
His sword unsheathed, and fiercely thus began :  
“ Now, by the gods who govern heaven above,  
Wert thou not weak with hunger, mad with love,  
That word had been thy last ; or in this grove 145  
This hand should force thee to renounce thy love ;  
The surety which I gave thee I defy : °  
Fool, not to know that love endures no tie,  
And Jove but laughs at lovers’ perjury.  
Know, I will serve the fair in thy despite ; 150  
But since thou art my kinsman and a knight,  
Here, have my faith, ° to-morrow in this grove  
Our arms shall plead the titles of our love :  
And Heaven so help my right, as I alone  
Will come, and keep the cause and quarrel both un-  
known, 155  
With arms of proof both for myself and thee ;  
Choose thou the best, and leave the worst to me.  
And, that at better ease thou mayest abide,  
Bedding and clothes I will this night provide,  
And needful sustenance, that thou mayest be ° 160  
A conquest better won, and worthy me.”  
His promise Palamon accepts ; but prayed,  
To keep it better than the first he made.  
Thus fair they parted till the morrow’s dawn ;

For each had laid his plighted faith to pawn. 11  
Oh Love! thou sternly dost thy power maintain,  
And wilt not bear a rival in thy reign!  
Tyrants and thou all fellowship disdain.  
This was in Arcite proved and Palamon:  
Both in despair, yet each would love alone. 12  
Arcite returned, and, as in honour tied,  
His foe with bedding and with food supplied;  
Then, ere the day, two suits of armour sought,  
Which borne before him on his steed he brought:  
Both were of shining steel, and wrought so pure 13  
As might the strokes of two such arms endure.  
Now, at the time, and in the appointed place,  
The challenger and challenged, face to face,  
Approach; each other from afar they knew,  
And from afar their hatred changed their hue. 14  
So stands the Thracian herdsman with his spear,  
Full in the gap, and hopes the hunted bear,  
And hears him rustling in the wood, and sees  
His course at distance by the bending trees:  
And thinks, Here comes my mortal enemy, 15  
And either he must fall in fight, or I:  
This while he thinks, he lifts aloft his dart;  
A generous chillness° seizes every part,  
The veins pour back the blood, and fortify the heart.

Thus pale they meet ; their eyes with fury burn ; 190  
None greets, for none the greeting will return ;  
But in dumb surliness each armed with care°  
His foe professed, as brother of the war ;  
Then both, no moment lost, at once advance  
Against each other, armed with sword and lance : 195  
They lash, they foin,° they pass, they strive to bore  
Their corslets, and the thinnest parts explore.  
Thus two long hours in equal arms they stood,  
And wounded wound, till both were bathed in blood  
And not a foot of ground had either got, 200  
As if the world depended on the spot.  
Fell Arcite like an angry tiger fared,  
And like a lion Palamon appeared :  
Or, as two boars whom love to battle draws,  
With rising bristles and with frothy jaws, 205  
Their adverse breasts with tusks oblique they wound ;  
With grunts and groans the forest rings around.  
So fought the knights, and fighting must abide,  
Till Fate an umpire sends their difference to decide.  
The power that ministers to God's decrees, 210  
And executes on earth what Heaven foresees,  
Called Providence, or Chance, or Fatal sway,  
Comes with resistless force, and finds or makes her  
way.

Nor kings, nor nations, nor united power  
One moment can retard the appointed hour; 215  
And some one day, some wondrous chance appears,  
Which happened not in centuries of years:  
For sure, whate'er we mortals hate or love  
Or hope or fear depends on powers above:  
They move our appetites to good or ill, 220  
And by foresight necessitate the will.  
In Theseus this appears, whose youthful joy  
Was beasts of chase in forests to destroy;  
This gentle knight, inspired by jolly° May,  
Forsook his easy couch at early day, 225  
And to the wood and wilds pursued his way.  
Beside him rode Hippolyta the queen,  
And Emily attired in lively green,  
With horns and hounds and all the tuneful cry,  
To hunt a royal hart within the covert nigh: 230  
And, as he followed Mars before, so now  
He serves the goddess of the silver bow.°  
The way that Theseus took was to the wood,  
Where the two knights in cruel battle stood:  
The laund° on which they fought, the appointed  
place 235  
In which the uncoupled hounds began the chase.  
Thither forth-right° he rode to rouse the prey,

That shaded by the fern in harbour lay ;  
And thence dislodged, was wont to leave the wood  
For open fields, and cross the crystal flood. 240  
Approached, and looking underneath the sun,°  
He saw proud Arcite and fierce Palamon,  
In mortal battle doubling blow on blow ;  
Like lightning flamed their fauchions to and fro,  
And shot a dreadful gleam ; so strong they strook,° 245  
There seemed less force required to fell an oak.  
He gazed with wonder on their equal might,  
Looked eager on, but knew not either knight.  
Resolved to learn, he spurred his fiery steed  
With goring rowels to provoke his speed. 250  
The minute ended that began the race,°  
So soon he was betwixt them on the place ;  
And with his sword unsheathed, on pain of life  
Commands both combatants to cease their strife ;  
Then with imperious tone pursues his threat : 255  
“ What are you ? why in arms together met ?  
How dares your pride presume against my laws,  
As in a listed field° to fight your cause,  
Unasked the royal grant ; no marshal by,  
As knightly rights require, nor judge to try ? ” 260  
Then Palamon, with scarce recovered breath,°  
Thus hasty spoke : “ We both deserve the death,

And both would die ; for look the world around,  
A pair so wretched is not to be found.  
Our life's a load ; encumbered with the charge, 265  
We long to set the imprisoned soul at large.  
Now, as thou art a sovereign judge, decree  
The rightful doom of death to him and me ;  
Let neither find thy grace, for grace is cruelty.  
Me first, O kill me first, and cure my woe ; 270  
Then sheath the sword of justice on my foe ;  
Or kill him first, for when his name is heard,  
He foremost will receive his due reward.  
Arcite of Thebes is he, thy mortal foe,  
On whom thy grace did liberty bestow ; 275  
But first contracted, that, if ever found  
By day or night upon the Athenian ground,  
His head should pay the forfeit ; see returned  
The perjured knight, his oath and honour scorned :  
For this is he, who, with a borrowed name 280  
And proffered service, to thy palace came,  
Now called Philostratus ; retained by thee,  
A traitor trusted, and in high degree,  
Aspiring to the bed of beauteous Emily.  
My part remains, from Thebes my birth I own, 285  
And call myself the unhappy Palamon.  
Think me not like that man ; since no disgrace



Can force me to renounce the honour of my race.  
Know me for what I am : I broke thy chain,  
Nor promised I thy prisoner to remain : 290  
The love of liberty with life is given,  
And life it self the inferior gift of Heaven.°  
Thus without crime I fled ; but farther know,  
I, with this Arcite, am thy mortal foe :  
Then give me death, since I thy life pursue ; 295  
For safeguard of thyself, death is my due.  
More wouldst thou know ? I love bright Emily,  
And for her sake and in her sight will die :  
But kill my rival too, for he no less  
Deserves ; and I thy righteous doom will bless, 300  
Assured that what I lose he never shall possess.”  
To this replied the stern Athenian Prince,  
And sourly smiled : “ In owning your offence  
You judge your self, and I but keep record  
In place of law, while you pronounce the word. 305  
Take your desert, the death you have decreed ;  
I seal your doom, and ratify the deed :  
By Mars, the patron of my arms, you die.”  
He said ; dumb sorrow seized the standers-by.°  
The Queen, above the rest, by nature good, 310  
(The pattern formed of perfect womanhood)  
For tender pity wept : when she began,

Through the bright quire the infectious virtue ran.  
All dropt their tears, even the contended maid;  
And thus among themselves they softly said: 315  
“What eyes can suffer this unworthy sight!  
Two youths of royal blood, renowned in fight,  
The mastership° of Heaven in face and mind,  
And lovers, far beyond their faithless kind: 319  
See their wide streaming wounds; they neither came  
From pride of empire nor desire of fame:  
Kings fight for kingdoms, madmen for applause;  
But love for love alone, that crowns the lover’s cause.”  
This thought, which ever bribes the beauteous kind,  
Such pity wrought in every lady’s mind, 325  
They left their steeds, and prostrate on the place,  
From the fierce King implored the offenders’ grace.

He paused a while, stood silent in his mood;  
(For yet his rage was boiling in his blood:)  
But soon his tender mind the impression felt. 330  
(As softest metals are not slow to melt;  
And pity soonest runs in gentle minds:)  
Then reasons with himself; and first he finds  
His passion cast a mist before his sense,  
And either made or magnified the offence. 335  
Offence? Of what? To whom? Who judged the  
cause?

The prisoner freed himself by Nature's laws;  
Born free, he sought his right; the man he freed°  
Was perjured, but his love excused the deed :  
Thus pondering, he looked under° with his eyes, 340  
And saw the women's tears, and heard their cries,  
Which moved compassion more ; he shook his head,  
And softly sighing to himself he said :

“Curse on the unpardoning prince, whom tears can  
draw

To no remorse, who rules by lion's law ; 345  
And deaf to prayers, by no submission bowed,  
Rends all alike, the penitent and proud ! ”  
At this with look serene he raised his head ;  
Reason resumed her place, and passion fled :  
Then thus aloud he spoke : — “The power of Love,° 350  
In earth, and seas, and air, and heaven above,  
Rules, unresisted, with an awful nod,  
By daily miracles declared a god ;  
He blinds the wise, gives eye-sight to the blind ;  
And moulds and stamps anew the lover's mind. 355  
Behold that Arcite, and this Palamon,  
Freed from my fetters, and in safety gone,  
What hindered either in their native soil  
At ease to reap the harvest of their toil ?  
But Love, their lord, did otherwise ordain, 360

And brought them, in their own despite again,  
To suffer death deserved; for well they know  
'Tis in my power, and I their deadly foe.  
The proverb holds, that to be wise and love,  
Is hardly granted to the gods above. 365  
See how the madmen bleed! behold the gains  
With which their master, Love, rewards their pains!  
For seven long years, on duty every day,  
Lo! their obedience, and their monarch's pay!  
Yet, as in duty bound, they serve him on; 370  
And ask the fools, they think it wisely done;  
Nor ease nor wealth nor life it self regard,  
For 'tis their maxim, love is love's reward.  
This is not all; the fair, for whom they strove,  
Nor knew before, nor could suspect their love, 375  
Nor thought, when she beheld the fight from far,  
Her beauty was the occasion of the war.  
But sure a general doom on man is past,  
And all are fools and lovers, first or last:  
This both by others and my self I know, 380  
For I have served their sovereign long ago;  
Oft have been caught within the winding train  
Of female snares, and felt the lover's pain,  
And learned how far the god can human hearts  
constrain.

To this remembrance, and the prayers of those      385  
Who for the offending warriors interpose,  
I give their forfeit lives, on this accord,<sup>o</sup>  
To do me homage as their sovereign lord ;  
And as my vassals, to their utmost might,  
Assist my person and assert my right.”      390  
This freely sworn, the knights their grace obtained ;  
Then thus the King his secret thought explained :  
“ If wealth or honour or a royal race,  
Or each or all, may win a lady’s grace,  
Then either of you knights may well deserve      395  
A princess born ; and such is she you serve :  
For Emily is sister to the crown,  
And but too well to both her beauty known :  
But should you combat till you both were dead,  
Two lovers cannot share a single bed.      400  
As, therefore, both are equal in degree,  
The lot of both be left to destiny.  
Now hear the award, and happy may it prove  
To her, and him who best deserves her love.  
Depart from hence in peace, and free as air,      405  
Search the wide world, and where you please repair ;  
But on the day when this returning sun  
To the same point through every sign<sup>o</sup> has run,  
Then each of you his hundred knights shall bring

In royal lists, to fight before the king ; 410  
And then the knight, whom Fate or happy Chance  
Shall with his friends to victory advance,  
And grace his arms so far in equal fight,  
From out the bars° to force his opposite,  
Or kill, or make him recreant° on the plain, 415  
The prize of valour and of love shall gain ;  
The vanquished party shall their claim release,  
And the long jars conclude in lasting peace.  
The charge be mine to adorn the chosen ground,  
The theatre of war, for champions so renowned ; 420  
And take the patron's place of either knight,  
With eyes impartial to behold the fight ;  
And Heaven of me so judge as I shall judge aright.  
If both are satisfied with this accord,  
Swear by the laws of knighthood on my sword." 425  
Who now but Palamon exults with joy ?  
And ravished Arcite seems to touch the sky.  
The whole assembled troop was pleased as well,  
Extolled the award, and on their knees they fell 429  
To bless the gracious King. The knights, with leave°  
Departing from the place, his last commands receive ;  
On Emily with equal ardour look,  
And from her eyes their inspiration took :  
From thence to Thebes' old walls pursue their way,

Each to provide his champions for the day.° 435

It might be deemed, on our historian's part,  
Or too much negligence or want of art,  
If he forgot the vast magnificence  
Of royal Theseus, and his large expense.  
He first enclosed for lists a level ground, 440  
The whole circumference a mile around;  
The form was circular; and all without  
A trench was sunk, to moat the place about.  
Within, an amphitheatre appeared,  
Raised in degrees,° to sixty paces reared: 445  
That when a man was placed in one degree,  
Height was allowed for him above to see.

Eastward was built a gate of marble white;°  
The like adorned the western opposite.  
A nobler object than this fabric was 450  
Rome never saw, nor of so vast a space:  
For, rich with spoils of many a conquered land,  
All arts and artists Theseus could command,  
Who sold for hire, or wrought for better fame;  
The master-painters and the carvers came. 455  
So rose within the compass of the year  
An age's work, a glorious theatre.  
Then o'er its eastern gate was raised above  
A temple, sacred to the Queen of Love;

An altar° stood below ; on either hand 460  
A priest with roses crowned, who held a myrtle wand.

The dome° of Mars was on the gate opposed,  
And on the north a turret was enclosed  
Within the wall of alabaster white  
And crimson coral, for the Queen of Night, 465  
Who takes in sylvan sports her chaste delight.

Within these oratories might you see  
Rich carvings, portraitures, and imagery ;  
Where every figure to the life expressed  
The godhead's power to whom it was addressed. 470  
In Venus' temple on the sides were seen  
The broken slumbers of enamoured men ;  
Prayers that even spoke, and pity seemed to call,  
And issuing sighs that smoked along the wall ; °  
Complaints and hot desires, the lover's hell, 475  
And scalding tears that wore a channel where they  
fell ;

And all around were nuptial bonds, the ties  
Of love's assurance, and a train of lies,  
That, made in lust, conclude in perjuries ;  
Beauty, and Youth, and Wealth, and Luxury, 480  
And sprightly Hope, and short-enduring Joy,  
And Sorceries, to raise the infernal powers,  
And Sigils° framed in planetary hours ;



Expense, and After-thought, and idle Care,  
And Doubts of motley hue, and dark Despair; 485  
Suspicious and fantastical Surmise,  
And Jealousy suffused,° with jaundice in her eyes,  
Discolouring all she viewed, in tawny dressed,  
Down-looked, and with a cuckow° on her fist.  
Opposed to her, on the other side advance 490  
The costly feast, the carol, and the dance,  
Minstrels and music, poetry and play,  
And balls by night, and tournaments by day.  
All these were painted on the wall, and more;  
With acts and monuments of times before; 495  
And others added by prophetic doom,  
And lovers yet unborn, and loves to come:  
For there the Idalian mount,° and Citheron,  
The court of Venus, was in colours drawn;  
Before the palace gate, in careless dress 500  
And loose array, sat portress Idleness;  
There by the fount Narcissus° pined alone;  
There Samson° was; with wiser Solomon,°  
And all the mighty names by love undone.  
Medea's° charms were there; Circean° feasts, 505  
With bowls that turned enamoured youths to beasts.  
Here might be seen, that beauty, wealth, and wit,  
And prowess to the power of love submit;

The spreading snare for all mankind is laid,  
And lovers all betray, and are betrayed. 510  
The Goddess self some noble hand had wrought;  
Smiling she seemed, and full of pleasing thought;  
From ocean as she first began to rise,  
And smoothed the ruffled seas, and cleared the skies,  
She trod the brine, all bare below the breast, 515  
And the green waves but ill concealed the rest:  
A lute she held; and on her head was seen  
A wreath of roses red and myrtles green;  
Her turtles° fanned the buxom° air above;  
And by his mother stood an infant Love,° 520  
With wings unfledged; his eyes were banded o'er,  
His hands a bow, his back a quiver bore,  
Supplied with arrows bright and keen, a deadly store.  
But in the dome of mighty Mars the red  
With different figures all the sides were spread; 525  
This temple,° less in form, with equal grace,  
Was imitative of the first in Thrace;°  
For that cold region was the loved abode°  
And sovereign mansion of the warrior god.  
The landscape was a forest wide and bare, 530  
Where neither beast nor human kind repair,  
The fowl that scent afar the borders fly,  
And shun the bitter blast, and wheel about the sky.

A cake of scurf lies baking on the ground,  
And prickly stubs, instead of trees, are found ; 535  
(Or woods with knots and knares° deformed and old,  
Headless the most, and hideous to behold ;  
A rattling tempest through the branches went,  
That stripped them bare, and one sole way they bent.  
Heaven froze above severe, the clouds congeal, 540  
And through the crystal vault appeared the standing  
hail.

Such was the face without : a mountain stood  
Threatening from high, and overlooked the wood :  
Beneath the lowering brow, and on a bent,°  
The temple stood of Mars armipotent ; ° 545  
The frame of burnished steel, that cast a glare  
From afar, and seemed to thaw the freezing air.  
A straight long entry to the temple led,  
Blind° with high walls, and horror over head ;  
Thence issued such a blast, and hollow roar, 550  
As threatened from the hinge to heave the door ;  
In through that door a northern light there shone ; °  
’Twas all it had, for windows there were none.  
The gate was adamant ; eternal frame,  
Which, hewed by Mars himself, from Indian quarries  
came, 555  
The labour of a God ; and all along

Tough iron plates were clenched to make it strong.  
A tun° about was every pillar there ;  
A polished mirror shone not half so clear.  
There saw I how the secret felon wrought, 560  
And treason labouring in the traitor's thought,  
And midwife Time the ripened plot to murder brought.  
There the red Anger dared the pallid Fear ;  
Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy leer,  
Soft, smiling, and demurely looking down,° 565  
But hid the dagger underneath the gown ;  
The assassinating wife, the household fiend ;  
And far the blackest there, the traitor-friend.  
On the other side there stood Destruction bare,  
Unpunished Rapine, and a waste of war ; 570  
Contest with sharpened knives in cloisters drawn,  
And all with blood bespread the holy lawn.  
Loud menaces were heard, and foul disgrace,  
And bawling infamy, in language base ;  
Till sense was lost in sound, and silence fled the  
place. 575  
The slayer of himself yet° saw I there,  
The gore congealed was clotted in his hair ;  
With eyes half closed and gaping mouth he lay,  
And grim as when he breathed his sullen soul away.  
In midst of all the dome, Misfortune sate, 580

And gloomy Discontent, and fell Debate,  
And Madness laughing in his ireful mood ;  
And armed Complaint on theft ; and cries of blood.  
There was the murdered corps, in covert laid,  
And violent death in thousand shapes displayed : 585  
The city to the soldier's rage resigned ;  
Successless wars, and poverty behind :  
Ships burnt in fight, or forced on rocky shores,  
And the rash hunter strangled by the boars : °  
The new-born babe by nurses overlaid ; ° 590  
And the cook caught within the raging fire he made.  
All ills of Mars his nature, ° flame and steel ;  
The gasping charioteer beneath the wheel  
Of his own car ; the ruined house that falls  
And intercepts her lord betwixt the walls : 595  
The whole division that to Mars pertains,  
All trades of death that deal in steel for gains  
Were there : the butcher, armourer, and smith,  
Who forges sharpened fauchions, or the scythe.  
The scarlet conquest ° on a tower was placed, 600  
With shouts and soldiers' acclamations graced :  
A pointed sword hung threatening o'er his head,  
Sustained but by a slender twine of thread.  
There saw I Mars his ides, ° the Capitol,  
The seer in vain foretelling Cæsar's fall ; 605

The last Triumvirs, and the wars they move,  
And Antony,° who lost the world for love.  
These, and a thousand more, the fane° adorn ;  
Their fates were painted ere the men were born,  
All copied from the heavens, and ruling force 610  
Of the red star,° in his revolving course.

The form of Mars high on a chariot stood,  
All sheathed in arms, and gruffly looked the god ;  
Two geomantic figures° were displayed  
Above his head, a warrior and a maid, 615  
One when direct, and one when retrograde.°

Tired with deformities of death, I haste  
To the third temple of Diana chaste.

A sylvan scene with various greens was drawn,  
Shades on the sides, and on the midst a lawn ; 620  
The silver Cynthia,° with her nymphs around,  
Pursued the flying deer, the woods with horns resound :  
Calisto° there stood manifest of shame,°

And, turned a bear, the northern star became :  
Her son° was next, and, by peculiar grace, 625  
In the cold circle° held the second place ;  
The stag Actæon° in the stream had spied  
The naked huntress, and for seeing died ;  
His hounds, unknowing of his change, pursue  
The chase, and their mistaken master° slew. 630

Peneian Daphné° too was there to see,  
Apollo's love before, and now his tree.  
The adjoining fane the assembled Greeks expressed,°  
And hunting of the Calydonian`beast.°  
CEnides' valour, and his envied prize ; 635  
The fatal power of Atalanta's eyes ;  
Diana's vengeance on the victor shown,  
The murderess mother, and consuming son ;  
The Volscian queen° extended on the plain,  
The treason punished, and the traitor slain. 640  
The rest were various huntings, well designed,  
And savage beasts destroyed, of every kind.  
The graceful goddess was arrayed in green ; °  
About her feet were little beagles° seen,  
That watched with upward eyes the motions of their  
Queen. 645  
Her legs were buskined, and the left before,  
In act to shoot ; a silver bow she bore,  
And at her back a painted quiver wore.  
She trod a waxing moon, that soon would wane, .  
And, drinking borrowed light, be filled again ; 650  
With downcast eyes, as seeming to survey  
The dark dominions,° her alternate sway.  
Before her stood a woman in her throes,  
And called Lucina's° aid, her burden to disclose.

All these the painter drew with such command, 655  
 That Nature snatched the pencil from his hand,  
 Ashamed and angry that his art could feign,  
 And mend<sup>o</sup> the tortures of a mother's pain.  
 Theseus beheld the fanes of every god,  
 And thought his mighty cost was well bestowed. 660  
 So princes now their poets should regard ;<sup>o</sup>  
 But few can write, and fewer can reward.

The theatre thus raised, the lists enclosed,<sup>o</sup>  
 And all with vast magnificence disposed,  
 We leave the monarch pleased, and haste to bring 665  
 The knights to combat, and their arms to sing.

Book III<sup>o</sup>

THE day approached when Fortune should decide  
 The important enterprise, and give the bride ;  
 For now the rivals round the world had sought,  
 And each his number, well appointed, brought.  
 The nations far and near contend in choice, 5  
 And send the flower of war by public voice;  
 That after or before were never known<sup>o</sup>  
 Such chiefs, as each an army seemed alone :  
 Beside the champions, all of high degree,<sup>o</sup>  
 Who knighthood loved, and deeds of chivalry, 10



Thronged to the lists, and envied to behold  
The names of others, not their own, enrolled.  
Nor seems it strange; for every noble knight  
Who loves the fair, and is endued with might,  
In such a quarrel would be proud to fight. 15  
There breathes not scarce a man on British ground°  
(An isle for love and arms of old renowned)  
But would have sold his life to purchase fame,  
To Palamon or Arcite sent his name;  
And had the land selected of the best,° 20  
Half had come hence, and let the world provide the  
rest.

A hundred knights with Palamon there came,  
Approved° in fight, and men of mighty name;  
Their arms were several,° as their nations were,  
But furnished all alike with sword and spear. 25  
Some wore coat armour, imitating scale,  
And next their skins were stubborn° shirts of mail:  
Some wore a breastplate and a light juppon,°  
Their horses clothed with rich caparison;  
Some for defence would leathern bucklers use 30  
Of folded hides, and others shields of Pruce.°  
One hung a pole-axe at his saddle-bow,  
And one a heavy mace to stun the foe;  
One for his legs and knees provided well,

With jambeux° armed, and double plates of steel ; 35  
This on his helmet wore a lady's glove,  
And that a sleeve embroidered by his love.

With Palamon above the rest in place,  
Lycurgus° came, the surly king of Thrace ;  
Black was his beard, and manly was his face ; 40  
The balls of his broad eyes rolled in his head,  
And glared betwixt a yellow and a red ;  
He looked a lion° with a gloomy stare,  
And o'er his eyebrows hung his matted hair ;  
Big-boned and large of limbs, with sinews strong, 45  
Broad-shouldered, and his arms were round and long.  
Four milk-white bulls (the Thracian use of old)  
Were yoked to draw his car of burnished gold.  
Upright he stood, and bore aloft his shield,  
Conspicuous from afar, and overlooked the field. 50  
His surcoat was a bear-skin on his back ;  
His hair hung long behind, and glossy raven-black.  
His ample forehead bore a coronet,  
With sparkling diamonds and with rubies set.  
Ten brace, and more, of greyhounds, snowy fair, 55  
And tall as stags, ran loose, and coursed around his  
chair,  
A match for pards° in flight, in grappling for the bear ;  
With golden muzzles all their mouths were bound,

And collars of the same their necks surround.  
Thus through the fields Lycurgus took his way ; 60  
His hundred knights attend in pomp and proud array.

To match this monarch, with strong Arcite came  
Emetrius,° king of Inde, a mighty name,  
On a bay courser, goodly to behold,  
The trappings of his horse embossed with barbarous  
gold. 65

Not Mars bestrode a steed with greater grace ;  
His surcoat o'er his arms was cloth of Thrace,  
Adorned with pearls, all orient,° round, and great ;  
His saddle was of gold, with emeralds set ;  
His shoulders large a mantle did attire, 70  
With rubies thick, and sparkling as the fire ;  
His amber-coloured locks in ringlets run,  
With graceful negligence, and shone against the sun.  
His nose was aquiline, his eyes were blue,  
Ruddy his lips, and fresh and fair his hue ; 75  
Some sprinkled freckles on his face were seen,  
Whose dusk set off the whiteness of the skin.  
His awful presence did the crowd surprise,  
Nor durst the rash spectator meet his eyes ; °  
Eyes that confessed him born for kingly sway, 80  
So fierce, they flashed intolerable day.

His age in nature's youthful prime appeared,°

And just began to bloom his yellow beard.  
Whene'er he spoke, his voice was heard around,  
Loud as a trumpet, with a silver sound; 85  
A laurel wreathed his temples, fresh, and green,  
And myrtle sprigs, the marks of love, were mixed  
between.

Upon his fist he bore, for his delight,  
An eagle well reclaimed,<sup>c</sup> and lily white.

His hundred knights attend him to the war, 90  
All armed for battle; save their heads were bare.  
Words and devices blazed on every shield,  
And pleasing was the terror of the field.  
For kings, and dukes, and barons you might see,  
Like sparkling stars, though different in degree, 95  
All for the increase<sup>o</sup> of arms, and love of chivalry.  
Before the king tame leopards led the way,  
And troops of lions innocently play.

So Bacchus through the conquered Indies rode,  
And beasts in gambols frisked before their honest<sup>o</sup> god.

In this array the war<sup>o</sup> of either side 101  
Through Athens passed with military pride.  
At prime,<sup>o</sup> they entered on the Sunday morn;  
Rich tapestry spread the streets, and flowers the posts  
adorn.<sup>o</sup>

The town was all a jubilee of feasts; 105

So Theseus willed in honour of his guests ;  
Him self with open arms the kings embraced,  
Then all the rest in their degrees were graced.  
No harbinger was needful for the night,  
For every house was proud to lodge a knight. 116

I pass the royal treat, nor must relate°  
The gifts bestowed, nor how the champions sate ;  
Who first, who last, or how the knights addressed  
Their vows, or who was fairest at the feast ;  
Whose voice, whose graceful dance did most surprise,  
Soft amorous sighs, and silent love of eyes. 117  
The rivals call my Muse another way,  
To sing their vigils for the ensuing day.  
'Twas ebbing darkness, past the noon of night : °  
And Phosphor, on the confines of the light, 120  
Promised the sun ; ere day began to spring,  
The tuneful lark already stretched her wing,  
And flickering on her nest, made short essays to sing.

When wakeful Palamon, preventing° day,  
Took to the royal lists his early way, 125  
To Venus at her fane, in her own house, to pray.  
There, falling on his knees before her shrine,  
He thus implored with prayers her power divine :  
“ Creator Venus, genial° power of love,  
The bliss of men below, and gods above ! ° 130

Beneath the sliding sun thou runst thy race,  
Dost fairest shine, and best become thy place.  
For thee the winds their eastern blasts forbear,  
Thy month reveals the spring, and opens all the year.  
Thee, Goddess, thee the storms of winter fly ; 135  
Earth smiles with flowers renewing, laughs the sky,  
And birds to lays of love their tuneful notes apply.  
For thee the lion loathes the taste of blood,  
And roaring hunts his female through the wood ;  
For thee the bulls rebellow through the groves, 140  
And tempt the stream, and snuff their absent loves.  
'Tis thine, whate'er is pleasant, good, or fair ;  
All nature is thy province, life thy care ;  
Thou madest the world, and dost the world repair.  
Thou gladder of the mount of Cytheron, 145  
Increase<sup>o</sup> of Jove, companion of the Sun,  
If e'er Adonis<sup>o</sup> touched thy tender heart,  
Have pity, Goddess, for thou knowest the smart !  
Alas ! I have not words to tell my grief ;  
To vent my sorrow would be some relief ; 150  
Light sufferings give us leisure to complain ;  
We groan, but cannot speak, in greater pain.  
O Goddess, tell thy self what I would say !  
Thou knowest it, and I feel too much to pray.  
So grant my suit, as I enforce my might, 155

In love to be thy champion and thy knight,  
A servant to thy sex, a slave to thee,  
A foe professed to barren chastity :  
Nor ask I fame or honour of the field,°  
Nor choose I more to vanquish than to yield : 160  
In my divine Emilia make me blest,  
Let Fate or partial Chance dispose the rest :  
Find thou the manner, and the means prepare ;  
Possession, more than conquest, is my care.  
Mars is the warrior's god ; in him it lies 165  
On whom he favours to confer the prize ;  
With smiling aspect you serenely move  
In your fifth orb, and rule the realm of love.°  
The Fates but only spin the coarser clue,  
The finest of the wool is left for you : 170  
Spare me but one small portion of the twine,  
And let the Sisters° cut below your line :  
The rest among the rubbish may they sweep,°  
Or add it to the yarn of some old miser's heap.  
But if you this ambitious prayer deny, 175  
(A wish, I grant, beyond mortality,)  
Then let me sink beneath proud Arcite's arms,°  
And, I once dead, let him possess her charms.”  
Thus ended he ; then, with observance due,  
The sacred incense on her altar threw : 180

The curling smoke mounts heavy from the fires ;  
At length it catches flame, and in a blaze expires ;  
At once the gracious Goddess gave the sign,  
Her statue shook, and trembled all the shrine :  
Pleased Palamon the tardy omen took ; 185  
For since the flames pursued the trailing smoke,  
He knew his boon was granted, but the day°  
To distance driven, and joy adjourned with long delay.

Now morn with rosy light had streaked the sky,°  
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily ; ° 190  
Addressed her early steps to Cynthia's fane,  
In state attended by her maiden train,  
Who bore the vests that holy rites require,  
Incense, and odorous gums, and covered fire.  
The plenteous horns with pleasant mead they crown,  
Nor wanted aught besides in honour of the Moon. 196  
Now, while the temple smoked with hallowed steam,  
They wash the virgin in a living stream ;  
The secret ceremonies I conceal,  
Uncouth, ° perhaps unlawful to reveal : 200  
But such they were as pagan use required,  
Performed by women when the men retired,  
Whose eyes profane their chaste mysterious rites  
Might turn to scandal or obscene delights.  
Well-meaners think no harm ; but for the rest, 205



Things sacred they pervert, and silence is the best.  
Her shining hair, uncombed, was loosely spread,<sup>o</sup>  
A crown of mastless<sup>o</sup> oak adorned her head :  
When to the shrine approached, the spotless maid  
Had kindling fires on either<sup>o</sup> altar laid ; 210  
(The rites were such as were observed of old,  
By Statius<sup>o</sup> in his Theban story told.)  
Then kneeling with her hands across her breast,  
Thus lowly she preferred her chaste request.  
“O Goddess, haunter of the woodland green, 215  
To whom both heaven and earth and seas are seen ;  
Queen of the nether skies, where half the year  
Thy silver beams descend, and light the gloomy sphere ;  
Goddess of maids, and conscious of our hearts,  
So keep me from the vengeance of thy darts, 220  
(Which Niobe’s<sup>o</sup> devoted issue felt,  
When hissing through the skies the feathered deaths  
were dealt,<sup>o</sup>)  
As I desire to live a virgin life,  
Nor know the name of mother or of wife.  
Thy votress from my tender years I am, 225  
And love, like thee, the woods and sylvan game.  
Like death, thou knowest, I loathe the nuptial state,  
And man, the tyrant of our sex, I hate,<sup>o</sup>  
A lowly servant, but a lofty mate ;<sup>o</sup>

Where love is duty on the female side, 230  
On theirs mere sensual gust, and sought with surly  
pride.

Now by thy triple shape, as thou art seen  
In heaven, earth, hell,<sup>o</sup> and everywhere a queen,  
Grant this my first desire ; let discord cease,  
And make betwixt the rivals lasting peace : 235  
Quench their hot fire, or far from me remove  
The flame, and turn it on some other love ;  
Or if my frowning stars have so decreed,  
That one must be rejected, one succeed,  
Make him my lord, within whose faithful breast 240  
Is fixed my image, and who loves me best.  
But oh ! even that avert ! I choose it not,  
But take it as the least unhappy lot.<sup>o</sup>  
A maid I am, and of thy virgin train ;  
Oh, let me still that spotless name retain ! 245  
Frequent the forests, thy chaste will obey,  
And only make the beasts of chace my prey !”

The flames ascend on either altar clear,  
While thus the blameless maid addressed her prayer.  
When lo ! the burning fire that shone so bright 250  
Flew off, all sudden, with extinguished light,  
And left one altar dark, a little space,  
Which turned self-kindled, and renewed the blaze ;

That other victor-flame a moment stood,<sup>o</sup>  
Then fell, and lifeless left the extinguished wood ; 255  
For ever lost, the irrevocable light  
Forsook the blackening coals, and sunk to night :  
At either end it whistled as it flew,  
And as the brands were green, so dropped the dew,  
Infected as it fell with sweat of sanguine hue. 260

The maid from that ill omen turned her eyes,  
And with loud shrieks and clamours rent the skies ;  
Nor knew what signified the boding sign,  
But found the powers displeased, and feared the wrath  
divine.

Then shook the sacred shrine, and sudden light 265  
Sprung through the vaulted roof, and made the temple  
bright.

The Power, behold ! the Power in glory shone,  
By her bent bow and her keen arrows known ;  
The rest,<sup>o</sup> a huntress issuing from the wood,  
Reclining on her cornel spear she stood. 270  
Then gracious thus began : “ Dismiss thy fear,  
And Heaven’s unchanged decrees attentive hear :  
More powerful gods have torn thee from my side,  
Unwilling to resign, and doomed a bride ;  
The two contending knights are weighed above ; 275  
One Mars protects, and one the Queen of Love :

But which the man is in the Thunderer's breast ; °  
This he pronounced, ' 'Tis he who loves thee best.'  
The fire that, once extinct, revived again  
Foreshows the love allotted to remain. 280

Farewell ! " she said, and vanished from the place ;  
The sheaf of arrows shook, and rattled in the case.  
Aghast at this, the royal virgin stood,  
Disclaimed, and now no more ° a sister of the wood :  
But to the parting Goddess thus she prayed : 285

" Propitious still, be present to my aid,  
Nor quite abandon your once favoured maid."  
Then sighing she returned ; but smiled betwixt,  
With hopes, and fears, and joys with sorrows mixt.

The next returning planetary hour ° 290  
Of Mars, who shared the heptarchy of power,  
His steps bold Arcite to the temple bent,  
To adorn with pagan rites the power armipotent :  
Then prostrate, low before his altar lay,  
And raised his manly voice, and thus began to pray : 295  
" Strong God of Arms, whose iron sceptre sways °  
The freezing North, and Hyperborean seas,  
And Scythian colds, and Thracia's wintry coast,  
Where stand thy steeds, and thou art honoured most :  
There most, but everywhere thy power is known, 300  
The fortune of the fight is all thy own :

Terror is thine, and wild amazement, flung  
From out thy chariot, withers even the strong;  
And disarray and shameful rout ensue,  
And force is added to the fainting crew. 305  
Acknowledged as thou art, accept my prayer!  
If aught I have achieved deserve thy care,  
If to my utmost power with sword and shield  
I dared the death, unknowing how to yield,  
And falling in my rank, still kept the field; 310  
Then let my arms prevail, by thee sustained,  
That Emily by conquest may be gained.  
Have pity on my pains; nor those unknown  
To Mars, which, when a lover,<sup>o</sup> were his own.  
Venus, the public care of all above, 315  
Thy stubborn heart has softened into love:  
By those dear pleasures, aid my arms in fight,  
And make me conquer in my patron's right:  
For I am young, a novice in the trade,  
The fool of love, unpractised to persuade, 320  
And want the soothing arts that catch the fair,  
But, caught my self, lie struggling in the snare;  
And she I love or laughs at all my pain  
Or knows her worth too well, and pays me with disdain.  
For sure I am, unless I win in arms, 325  
To stand excluded from Emilia's charms:

Nor can my strength avail, unless by me  
Endued with force I gain the victory ;  
Then for the fire which warmed thy generous° heart,  
Pity thy subject's pains and equal smart. 330  
So be the morrow's sweat and labour mine,  
The palm and honour of the conquest thine :  
Then shall the war, and stern debate, and strife  
Immortal be the business of my life ;  
And in thy fane, the dusty spoils among, 335  
High on the burnished roof, my banner shall be hung,  
Ranked with my champion's bucklers ; and below,  
With arms reversed, the achievements° of my foe ;  
And while these limbs the vital spirit feeds,  
While day to night and night to day succeeds, 340  
Thy smoking altar shall be fat with food  
Of incense and the grateful steam of blood ;  
Burnt-offerings morn and evening shall be thine,  
And fires eternal in thy temple shine.  
The bush of yellow beard,° this length of hair, 345  
Which from my birth inviolate I bear,  
Guiltless of steel, and from the razor free,  
Shall fall a plenteous crop, reserved for thee.  
So may my arms with victory be blest,°  
I ask no more ; let Fate dispose the rest." 350  
The champion ceased ; there followed in the close°

A hollow groan ; a murmuring wind arose ; °  
The rings of iron, that on the doors were hung,  
Sent out a jarring sound, and harshly rung :  
The bolted gates flew open at the blast, 355  
The storm rushed in, and Arcite stood aghast :  
The flames were blown aside, yet shone they bright,  
Fanned by the wind, and gave a ruffled light.

Then from the ground a scent began to rise,  
Sweet smelling as accepted sacrifice : 360  
This omen pleased, and as the flames aspire,  
With odorous incense Arcite heaps the fire :  
Nor wanted hymns to Mars or heathen charms : °  
At length the nodding statue clashed his arms,  
And with a sullen sound and feeble cry, 365  
Half sunk ° and half pronounced the word of Victory.  
For this, with soul devout, he thanked the God,  
And, of success secure, returned to his abode.

These vows, thus granted, raised a strife above  
Betwixt the God of War and Queen of Love. 370  
She, granting first, had right of time to plead ;  
But he had granted too, nor would recede.  
Jove was for Venus, but he feared his wife, °  
And seemed unwilling to decide the strife ;  
Till Saturn ° from his leaden throne arose, 375  
And found a way the difference to compose :

Though sparing of his grace, to mischief bent,  
He seldom does a good with good intent.  
Wayward, but wise ; by long experience taught,  
To please both parties, for ill ends, he sought : 380  
For this advantage age from youth has won,<sup>o</sup>  
As not to be outridden, though outrun.  
By fortune he was now to Venus trined,<sup>o</sup>  
And with stern Mars in Capricorn was joined :  
Of him disposing in his own abode, 385  
He soothed the Goddess, while he gulled the God :  
“Cease, daughter, to complain, and stint<sup>o</sup> the strife ;  
Thy Palamon shall have his promised wife :  
And Mars, the lord of conquest, in the fight  
With palm and laurel shall adorn his knight. 390  
Wide is my course,<sup>o</sup> nor turn I to my place  
Till length of time, and move with tardy pace.  
Man feels me, when I press the etherial plains ;<sup>o</sup>  
My hand is heavy, and the wound remains.  
Mine is the shipwreck in a watery sign ; 395  
And in an earthy the dark dungeon mine.  
Cold shivering agues, melancholy care,  
And bitter blasting winds, and poisoned air,  
Are mine, and wilful death, resulting from despair.  
The throttling quinsy 'tis my star appoints, 400  
And rheumatisms I send to rack the joints :



When churls rebel against their native prince,  
I arm their hands, and furnish the pretence;  
And housing in the lion's hateful sign,  
Bought senates and deserting troops are mine. 405  
Mine is the privy poisoning; I command  
Unkindly seasons and ungrateful land.

By me kings' palaces are pushed to ground,  
And miners crushed beneath their mines are found.  
'Twas I slew Samson, when the pillared hall 410  
Fell down, and crushed the many with the fall.

My looking is the sire of pestilence,  
That sweeps at once the people and the prince.  
Now weep no more, but trust thy grandsire's art,  
Mars shall be pleased, and thou perform thy part. 415  
'Tis ill, though different your complexions<sup>o</sup> are,  
The family of Heaven for men should war."

The expedient pleased, where neither lost his right;  
Mars had the day, and Venus had the night.  
The management they left to Chronos'<sup>o</sup> care. 420  
Now turn we to the effect,<sup>o</sup> and sing the war.

In Athens all was pleasure, mirth, and play,  
All proper to the spring, and sprightly May:  
Which every soul inspired with such delight,  
'Twas justing all the day, and love at night. 425  
Heaven smiled, and gladdened was the heart of man;

And Venus had the world as when it first began.  
At length in sleep their bodies they compose,  
And dreamt the future fight, and early rose.

Now scarce the dawning day began to spring, 430  
As at a signal given, the streets with clamours ring:  
At once the crowd arose; confused and high,  
Even from the heaven was heard a shouting cry,°  
For Mars was early up, and roused the sky.  
The gods came downward to behold the wars, 435  
Sharpening their sights, and leaning from their stars.  
The neighing of the generous° horse was heard,  
For battle by the busy groom prepared:  
Rustling of harness,° rattling of the shield,°  
Clattering of armour, furbished for the field. 440  
Crowds to the castle mounted up the street;  
Battering the pavement with their coursers' feet:  
The greedy sight might there devour the gold  
Of glittering arms, too dazzling to behold:  
And polished steel that cast the view aside, 445  
And crested morions,° with their plummy pride.  
Knights, with a long retinue of their squires,°  
In gaudy liveries march, and quaint attires.  
One laced the helm, another held the lance;  
A third the shining buckler did advance.° 450  
The courser pawed the ground with restless feet,

And snorting foamed, and champed the golden bit.  
The smiths and armourers on palfreys ride,  
Files in their hands, and hammers at their side,  
And nails for loosened spears and thongs for shields  
provide. 455

The yeomen guard the streets in seemly bands;  
And clowns come crowding on, with cudgels in their  
hands.

The trumpets, next the gate, in order placed,<sup>o</sup>  
Attend the sign to sound the martial blast :  
The palace yard is filled with floating tides, 460  
And the last comers bear the former to the sides.  
The throng is in the midst; the common crew  
Shut out, the hall admits the better few.

In knots they stand, or in a rank they walk,  
Serious in aspect, earnest in their talk ; 465  
Factious, and favouring this or t'other side,  
As their strong fancies and weak reason guide ;  
Their wagers back their wishes ; numbers hold  
With the fair freckled king,<sup>o</sup> and beard of gold :  
So vigorous are his eyes, such rays they cast, 470  
So prominent his eagle's beak is placed.

But most their looks on the black monarch bend ;  
His rising muscles and his brawn commend ;  
His double-biting axe, and beamy spear,

Each asking a gigantic force to rear. 475  
All spoke as partial favour moved the mind ;  
And, safe themselves, at others' cost divined.

Waked by the cries, the Athenian chief arose,  
The knightly forms of combat to dispose ;  
And passing through the obsequious guards, he sate  
Conspicuous on a throne, sublime in state ; 481  
There, for the two contending knights he sent ;  
Armed cap-a-pe,<sup>o</sup> with reverence low they bent ;  
He smiled on both, and with superior look  
Alike their offered adoration took. 485

The people press on every side to see  
Their awful Prince, and hear his high decree.  
Then signing to their heralds with his hand,  
They gave his orders from their lofty stand.  
Silence is thrice enjoined ; then thus aloud 490  
The king-at-arms<sup>o</sup> bespeaks the knights and listening  
crowd :

“Our sovereign lord has pondered in his mind  
The means to spare the blood of gentle kind ;<sup>o</sup>  
And of his grace and inborn clemency  
He modifies his first severe decree, 495  
The keener edge of battle to rebate,<sup>o</sup>  
The troops for honour fighting, not for hate.  
He wills, not death should terminate their strife,

And wounds, if wounds ensue, be short of° life ;  
But issues, ere the fight, his dread command, 500  
That slings afar, and poniards hand to hand,  
Be banished from the field ; that none shall dare  
With shortened sword to stab in closer war ;  
But in fair combat fight with manly strength,  
Nor push with biting point, but strike at length.° 505  
The turney is allowed but one career°  
Of the tough ash, with the sharp-grinded spear ;  
But knights unhorsed may rise from off the plain,  
And fight on foot their honour to regain ;  
Nor, if at mischief° taken, on the ground 510  
Be slain, but prisoners to the pillar bound,  
At either barrier placed ; nor, captives made,  
Be freed, or armed anew the fight invade :°  
The chief of either side, bereft of life,  
Or yielded to his foe, concludes the strife. 515  
Thus dooms° the lord : now valiant knights and young,  
Fight each his fill, with swords and maces long."

The herald ends: the vaulted firmament  
With loud acclaims and vast applause is rent :  
Heaven guard a Prince so gracious and so good, 520  
So just, and yet so provident° of blood !  
This was the general cry. The trumpets sound,  
And warlike symphony is heard around.

The marching troops through Athens take their way,  
The great Earl-marshal orders their array. 525  
The fair from high the passing pomp behold;  
A rain of flowers is from the windows rolled.  
The casements are with golden tissue spread,  
And horses' hoofs, for earth, on silken tapestry  
tread.°

The King goes midmost, and the rivals ride 530  
In equal rank, and close his either side.  
Next after these there rode the royal wife,  
With Emily, the cause and the reward of strife.  
The following cavalcade, by three and three,  
Proceed by titles marshalled in degree. 535  
Thus through the southern gate they take their way,  
And at the list arrived ere prime of day.  
There, parting from the King, the chiefs divide,  
And wheeling east and west, before their many°  
ride.

The Athenian monarch mounts his throne on high, 540  
And after him the Queen and Emily:  
Next these, the kindred of the crown are graced  
With nearer seats, and lords by ladies placed.  
Scarce were they seated, when with clamours loud  
In rushed at once a rude promiscuous crowd, 545  
The guards, and then each other overbear,

And in a moment throng the spacious theatre.  
Now changed the jarring noise to whispers low,  
As winds forsaking seas more softly blow,<sup>o</sup>  
When at the western gate, on which the car 550  
Is placed aloft that bears the God of War,  
Proud Arcite entering armed before his train  
Stops at the barrier, and divides the plain.<sup>o</sup>  
Red was his banner, and displayed abroad  
The bloody colours of his patron god. 555

At that self<sup>o</sup> moment enters Palamon  
The gate of Venus, and the rising Sun ;  
Waved by the wanton winds, his banner flies,  
All maiden white, and shares the people's eyes.  
From east to west, look all the world around, 560  
Two troops so matched were never to be found ;  
Such bodies built for strength, of equal age,  
In stature sized ;<sup>o</sup> so proud an equipage :  
The nicest eye could no distinction make,  
Where lay the advantage, or what side to take. 565

Thus ranged, the herald for the last proclaims  
A silence, while they answered to their names :  
For so the king decreed, to shun with care  
The fraud of musters false, the common bane of  
war.

The tale<sup>o</sup> was just, and then the gates were closed ; 570

And chief to chief, and troop to troop opposed.  
The heralds last retired, and loudly cried,  
"The fortune of the field be fairly tried!"

At this the challenger, with fierce defy,  
His trumpet sounds; the challenged makes reply: 575  
With clangour rings the field, resounds the vaulted  
sky.

Their vizors closed, their lances in the rest,  
Or at the helmet pointed or the crest,  
They vanish from the barrier, speed the race,  
And spurring see decrease the middle space. 580

A cloud of smoke envelopes either host,  
And all at once the combatants are lost:  
Darkling° they join adverse, and shock unseen,  
Coursers with coursers justling, men with men:  
As labouring in eclipse, a while they stay, 585  
Till the next blast of wind restores the day.

They look anew: the beauteous form of fight  
Is changed, and war appears a grisly sight.  
Two troops in fair array one moment showed,  
The next, a field with fallen bodies strowed: 590  
Not half the number in their seats are found;  
But men and steeds lie grovelling on the ground.  
The points of spears are stuck within the shield,  
The steeds without their riders scour the field.



The knights unhorsed, on foot renew the fight; 595  
The glittering fauchions cast a gleaming light;  
Hauberks° and helms are hewed with many a wound,  
Out spins the streaming blood, and dyes the ground.  
The mighty maces with such haste descend,  
They break the bones, and make the solid armour bend.  
This thrusts amid the throng with furious force; 601  
Down goes, at once, the horseman and the horse:  
That courser stumbles on the fallen steed,  
And, floundering, throws the rider o'er his head.  
One rolls along, a football to his foes; 605  
One with a broken truncheon deals his blows.  
This halting, this disabled with his wound,  
In triumph led, is to the pillar bound,  
Where by the king's award he must abide:  
There goes a captive led on t'other side. 610  
By fits° they cease, and leaning on the lance,  
Take breath a while, and to new fight advance.  
Full oft the rivals° met, and neither spared  
His utmost force, and each forgot to ward:°  
The head of this was to the saddle bent, 615  
The other backward to the crupper sent:  
Both were by turns unhorsed; the jealous blows  
Fall thick and heavy, when on foot they close.  
So deep their fauchions bite, that every stroke

Pierced to the quick; and equal wounds they gave  
and took. 620

Borne far asunder by the tides of men,  
Like adamant and steel they met agen.

So when a tiger sucks the bullock's blood,  
A famished lion issuing from the wood  
Roars lordly fierce, and challenges the food.° 625  
Each claims possession, neither will obey,  
But both their paws are fastened on the prey;  
They bite, they tear; and while in vain they strive,  
The swains come armed between, and both to distance  
drive.

At length, as Fate foredoomed, and all things tend  
By course of time to their appointed end; 631  
So when the sun to west was far declined,  
And both afresh in mortal battle joined,  
The strong Emetrius came in Arcite's aid,  
And Palamon with odds was overlaid:° 635  
For, turning short, he struck with all his might  
Full on the helmet of the unwary knight.  
Deep was the wound; he staggered with the blow,  
And turned him to his unexpected foe;  
Whom with such force he struck, he felled him° down,  
And cleft the circle of his golden crown. 641  
But Arcite's men, who now prevailed in fight,

Twice ten at once surround the single knight:  
O'erpowered at length, they force him to the ground,  
Unyielded as he was, and to the pillar bound;      645  
And king Lycurgus, while he fought in vain  
His friend to free, was tumbled on the plain.

Who now laments but Palamon, compelled  
No more to try the fortune of the field,  
And, worse than death, to view with hateful° eyes      650  
His rival's conquest, and renounce the prize!

The royal judge on his tribunal placed,  
Who had beheld the fight from first to last,  
Bad cease the war; pronouncing from on high,  
Arcite of Thebes had won the beauteous Emily.      655  
The sound of trumpets to the voice replied,  
And round the royal lists the heralds cried,  
"Arcite of Thebes has won the beauteous bride!"

The people rend the skies with vast applause;  
All own° the chief, when Fortune owns the cause.°      660  
Arcite is owned even by the gods above,  
And conquering Mars insults the Queen of Love.  
So laughed he when the rightful Titan failed,°  
And Jove's usurping arms in heaven prevailed.  
Laughed all the powers who favour tyranny,      665  
And all the standing army of the sky.  
But Venus with dejected eyes appears,

And weeping on the lists distilled her tears ;  
Her will refused, which grieves a woman most,  
And, in her champion foiled, the cause of Love is lost.  
Till Saturn said : — “ Fair daughter, now be still, 671  
The blustering fool has satisfied his will ;  
His boon is given ; his knight has gained the day,  
But lost the prize ; the arrears are yet to pay.  
Thy hour is come, and mine the care shall be 675  
To please thy knight, and set thy promise free.”

Now while the heralds run the lists around,  
And Arcite ! Arcite ! heaven and earth resound,  
A miracle (nor less it could be called)  
Their joy with unexpected sorrow palled. 680  
The victor knight had laid his helm aside,  
Part for his ease, the greater part for pride ;  
Bareheaded, popularly low he bowed,  
And paid the salutations of the crowd ;  
Then spurring, at full speed, ran endlong° on 685  
Where Theseus sat on his imperial throne ;  
Furious he drove, and upward cast his eye,  
Where, next the Queen, was placed his Emily ;  
Then passing, to the saddle-bow he bent ;  
A sweet regard the gracious virgin lent ; 690  
(For women, to the brave an easy prey,  
Still follow Fortune, where she leads the way :)

Just then from earth sprung out a flashing fire,  
By Pluto sent, at Saturn's bad desire :  
The startling steed was seized with sudden fright, 695  
And, bounding, o'er the pummel cast the knight ;  
Forward he flew, and pitching on his head,  
He quivered with his feet,° and lay for dead.  
Black was his countenance in a little space,  
For all the blood was gathered in his face. 700  
Help was at hand : they reared him from the ground,  
And from his cumbrous arms his limbs unbound ;  
Then lanced a vein, and watched returning breath ;  
It came, but clogged with symptoms of his death.  
The saddle-bow the noble parts had prest, 705  
All bruised and mortified his manly breast.  
Him still entranced,° and in a litter laid,  
They bore from field, and to his bed conveyed.  
At length he waked ; and, with a feeble cry,  
The word he first pronounced was Emily. 710

Mean time the King, though inwardly he mourned,  
In pomp triumphant to the town returned,  
Attended by the chiefs who fought the field,  
(Now friendly mixed, and in one troop compelled ;)°  
Composed his looks to counterfeited cheer, 715  
And bade them not for Arcite's life to fear.  
But that which gladdened all the warrior train,



At length they took their leave, the time expired,  
Well pleased, and to their several homes retired.

Mean while, the health of Arcite still impairs;  
From bad proceeds to worse, and mocks the leech's  
cares;

Swoln is his breast; his inward pains increase; 745

All means are used, and all without success.

The clotted blood lies heavy on his heart,

Corrupts, and there remains in spite of art;

Nor breathing veins nor cupping will prevail;

All outward remedies and inward fail. 750

The mould of nature's fabric is destroyed,

Her vessels discomposed, her virtue void:

The bellows of his lungs begins to swell;

All out of frame is every secret cell,

Nor can the good receive, nor bad expel. 755

Those breathing organs, thus within opprest,

With venom soon distend the sinews of his breast.

Nought profits him to save abandoned life,

Nor vomit's upward aid, nor downward laxative.

The midmost region battered and destroyed, 760

When nature cannot work, the effect of art is void: °

For physic can but mend our crazy° state,

Patch an old building, not a new create.

Arcite is doomed to die in all his pride,

Must leave his youth, and yield his beauteous bride, 765  
Gained hardly° against right,° and unenjoyed.  
When 'twas declared all hope of life was past,  
Conscience, that of all physic works the last,  
Caused him to send for Emily in haste.  
With her, at his desire, came Palamon; 770  
Then, on his pillow raised, he thus begun :  
“ No language can express the smallest part  
Of what I feel, and suffer in my heart,  
For you, whom best I love and value most;  
But to your service I bequeath my ghost; 775  
Which, from this mortal body when untied,  
Unseen, unheard, shall hover at your side;  
Nor fright you waking, nor your sleep offend,  
But wait officious,° and your steps attend.  
How I have loved, excuse my faltering tongue,° 780  
My spirit's feeble, and my pains are strong :  
This I may say, I only grieve to die,  
Because I lose my charming Emily.  
To die, when Heaven had put you in my power !  
Fate could not choose a more malicious hour. 785  
What greater curse could envious Fortune give,  
Than just to die when I began to live !  
Vain men ! how vanishing a bliss we crave;  
Now warm in love, now withering in the grave !°



Never, O never more to see the sun ! 790  
Still dark, in a damp vault, and still alone !  
This fate is common ; but I lose my breath  
Near bliss, and yet not blessed before my death.  
Farewell ! but take me dying in your arms ;  
'Tis all I can enjoy of all your charms : 795  
This hand I cannot but in death resign ;  
Ah, could I live ! but while I live 'tis mine.  
I feel my end approach, and thus embraced  
Am pleased to die ; but hear me speak my last :  
Ah, my sweet foe ! for you, and you alone,° 800  
I broke my faith with injured Palamon.  
But love the sense of right and wrong confounds ;  
Strong love and proud ambition have no bounds.  
And much I doubt,° should Heaven my life prolong,  
I should return to justify my wrong ; 805  
For while my former flames remain within,  
Repentance is but want of power to sin.  
With mortal hatred I pursued his life,  
Nor he nor you were guilty of the strife ;  
Nor I, but as I loved ; yet all combined, 810  
Your beauty and my impotence of mind,  
And his concurrent flame that blew my fire,  
For still our kindred souls had one desire.  
He had a moment's right in point of time ;

Had I seen first, then his had been the crime. 815  
Fate made it mine, and justified his right;  
Nor holds this earth a more deserving knight  
For virtue, valour, and for noble blood,  
Truth, honour, all that is comprised in good;  
So help me Heaven, in all the world is none° 820  
So worthy to be loved as Palamon. •  
He loves you too, with such a holy fire,  
As will not, cannot, but with life expire:  
Our vowed affections both have often tried,  
Nor any love but yours could ours divide. 825  
Then, by my love's inviolable band,  
By my long suffering and my short command,  
If e'er you plight your vows when I am gone,  
Have pity on the faithful Palamon."  
This was his last; for Death came on amain, 830  
And exercised below° his iron reign;  
Then upward to the seat of life he goes;  
Sense fled before him, what he touched he froze:  
Yet could he not his closing eyes withdraw,  
Though less and less of Emily he saw; 835  
So, speechless, for a little space he lay;  
Then grasped the hand he held, and sighed his soul  
away.°

But whither went his soul? let such relate

Who search the secrets of the future state :  
Divines can say but what themselves believe ; 840  
Strong proofs they have, but not demonstrative ; °  
For, were all plain, then all sides must agree,  
And faith itself be lost in certainty.  
To live uprightly then is sure the best ;  
To save ourselves, and not to damn the rest. 845  
The soul of Arcite went where heathens go,  
Who better live than we, though less they know.

In Palamon a manly grief appears ; °  
Silent he wept, ashamed to show his tears.  
Emilia shrieked but once ; and then, opprest 850  
With sorrow, sunk upon her lover's breast :  
Till Theseus in his arms conveyed with care  
Far from so sad a sight the swooning fair.  
'Twere loss of time her sorrow to relate ;  
Ill bears the sex a youthful lover's fate, 855  
When just approaching to the nuptial state :  
But, like a low-hung cloud, it rains so fast,  
That all at once it falls, and cannot last.  
The face of things is changed, and Athens now,  
That laughed so late, becomes the scene of woe. 860  
Matrons and maids, both sexes, every state,  
With tears lament the knight's untimely fate.  
Not greater grief in falling Troy was seen

For Hector's death ; but Hector was not then.<sup>o</sup>  
Old men with dust deformed their hoary hair ; 865  
The women beat their breasts, their cheeks they tear.  
“ Why wouldst thou go,” with one consent they cry,  
“ When thou hadst gold enough, and Emily ? ”

Theseus himself, who should have cheered the grief  
Of others, wanted now the same relief : 870  
Old Ægeus only could revive his son,  
Who various changes of the world had known,  
And strange vicissitudes of human fate,  
Still<sup>o</sup> altering, never in a steady state :  
Good after ill and after pain delight, 875  
Alternate, like the scenes of day and night.  
Since every man who lives is born to die,  
And none can boast sincere<sup>o</sup> felicity,  
With equal mind, what happens, let us bear,  
Nor joy, nor grieve too much for things beyond our  
care. 880

Like pilgrims to the appointed place we tend ;  
The world's an inn, and death the journey's end.  
Even kings but play, and when their part is done,  
Some other, worse or better, mount the throne.  
With words like these the crowd was satisfied ; 885  
And so they would have been, had Theseus died.  
But he, their King, was labouring in his mind

A fitting place for funeral pomps to find,  
Which were in honour of the dead designed.  
And, after long debate, at last he found 890  
(As Love itself had marked the spot of ground,)      °  
That grove for ever green, that conscious laund, °  
Where he with Palamon fought hand to hand ;  
That, where he fed his amorous desires  
With soft complaints, and felt his hottest fires, 895  
There other flames might waste his earthly part,  
And burn his limbs, where love had burned his heart.

This once resolved, the peasants were enjoined  
Sere-wood, ° and firs, and doddered ° oaks to find.  
With sounding axes to the grove they go, 900  
Fell, split, and lay the fuel in a row ; °  
Vulcanian ° food : a bier is next prepared,  
On which the lifeless body should be reared,  
Covered with cloth of gold ; on which was laid  
The corps of Arcite, in like robes arrayed. 905  
White gloves ° were on his hands, and on his head  
A wreath of laurel, mixed with myrtle, ° spread.  
A sword keen-edged within his right he held,  
The warlike emblem of the conquered field :  
Bare was his manly visage on the bier ; 910  
Menaced ° his countenance, even in death severe.  
Then to the palace-hall they bore the knight,

To lie in solemn state, a public sight :  
Groans, cries, and howlings fill the crowded place,  
And unaffected sorrow sat on every face. 915  
Sad Palamon above the rest appears,  
In sable garments, dewed with gushing tears ;  
His auburn locks on either shoulder flowed,  
Which to the funeral of his friend he vowed ;  
But Emily, as chief, was next his side, 920  
A virgin-widow and a mourning bride.  
And, that the princely obsequies might be  
Performed according to his high degree,  
The steed, that bore him living to the fight,  
Was trapped with polished steel, all shining bright, 925  
And covered with the achievements of the knight.  
The riders rode abreast ; and one his shield,°  
His lance of cornel-wood another held ;  
The third his bow, and, glorious to behold,  
The costly quiver, all of burnished gold. 930  
The noblest of the Grecians next appear,  
And weeping on their shoulders bore the bier ;  
With sober pace they marched, and often stayed,  
And through the master-street° the corps conveyed.  
The houses to their tops with black were spread, 935  
And even the pavements were with mourning hid.  
The right side of the pall old Ægeus kept,

And on the left the royal Theseus wept;  
Each bore a golden bowl of work divine,  
With honey filled, and milk, and mixed with ruddy  
wine. 940

Then Palamon, the kinsman of the slain,  
And after him appeared the illustrious train.  
To grace the pomp came Emily the bright,  
With covered fire, the funeral pile to light.  
With high devotion was the service made, 945  
And all the rites of pagan honour paid:  
So lofty was the pile, a Parthian bow,  
With vigour drawn, must send the shaft below.  
The bottom was full twenty fathom broad,  
With crackling straw beneath in due proportion  
stowed. 950

The fabric seemed a wood of rising green,  
With sulphur and bitumen cast between  
To feed the flames: the trees were unctuous fir,  
And mountain-ash, the mother of the spear;  
The mourner-yew<sup>o</sup> and builder-oak were there, 955  
The beech, the swimming alder,<sup>o</sup> and the plane,  
Hard box, and linden of a softer grain,  
And laurels, which the gods for conquering chiefs  
ordain.

How they were ranked shall rest untold by me,

With° nameless Nymphs that lived in every tree; 960  
Nor how the Dryads and the woodland train,  
Disherited, ran howling o'er the plain:  
Nor how the birds to foreign seats° repaired,  
Or beasts that bolted out and saw the forest bared:  
Nor how the ground now cleared with ghastly fright  
Beheld the sudden sun, a stranger to the light. 966

The straw, as first I said, was laid below:  
Of chips and sere-wood was the second row;  
The third of greens, and timber newly felled;  
The fourth high stage the fragrant odours held, 970  
And pearls, and precious stones, and rich array;  
In midst of which, embalmed, the body lay.  
The service sung, the maid with mourning eyes  
The stubble fired; the smouldering flames arise:  
This office done, she sunk upon the ground; 975  
But what she spoke, recovered from her swoond,  
I want the wit in moving words to dress;  
But by themselves the tender sex may guess.  
While the devouring fire was burning fast,  
Rich jewels in the flame the wealthy cast; 980  
And some their shields, and some their lances threw,  
And gave the warrior's ghost a warrior's due.  
Full bowls of wine, of honey, milk and blood  
Were poured upon the pile of burning wood,



And hissing flames receive, and hungry lick the food.  
Then thrice the mounted squadrons ride around 986  
The fire, and Arcite's name they thrice resound :  
" Hail and farewell ! " they shouted thrice amain,  
Thrice facing to the left, and thrice they turned  
again :

Still, as they turned, they beat their clattering shields ;  
The women mix their cries, and clamour fills the  
fields. 991

The warlike wakes<sup>o</sup> continued all the night,  
And funeral games were played at new returning light :  
Who naked wrestled best, besmeared with oil,  
Or who with gauntlets gave or took<sup>o</sup> the foil, 995  
I will not tell you, nor would you attend ;  
But briefly haste to my long story's end.

I pass the rest ; the year was fully mourned,  
And Palamon long since to Thebes returned :  
When, by the Grecians' general consent, 1000  
At Athens Theseus held his parliament ;  
Among the laws that passed, it was decreed,  
That conquered Thebes from bondage should be freed ;  
Reserving homage to the Athenian throne,  
To which the sovereign summoned Palamon. 1005  
Unknowing of the cause, he took his way,  
Mournful in mind, and still in black array.

The monarch mounts the throne, and, placed on high,  
Commands into the court the beauteous Emily.

So called, she came; the senate rose, and paid      1010  
Becoming reverence to the royal maid.

And first, soft whispers through the assembly went;  
With silent wonder then they watched the event; °  
All hushed, the King arose with awful grace;  
Deep thought was in his breast, and counsel in his  
face:      1015

At length he sighed, and having first prepared  
The attentive audience, thus his will declared:

“The Cause and Spring of motion from above°  
Hung down on earth the golden chain of Love;  
Great was the effect, and high was his intent,      1020  
When peace among the jarring seeds° he sent;  
Fire, flood, and earth and air by this were bound,  
And Love, the common link, the new creation crowned.  
The chain still holds; for though the forms decay,  
Eternal matter never wears away:      1025

The same first mover certain bounds has placed,  
How long° those perishable forms shall last;  
Nor can they last beyond the time assigned  
By that all-seeing and all-making Mind:  
Shorten their hours they may, for will is free,°      1030  
But never pass the appointed destiny.

So men oppressed, when weary of their breath,  
Throw off the burden, and suborn<sup>o</sup> their death.  
Then, since those forms begin, and have their end,  
On some unaltered cause they sure depend: 1035  
Parts of the whole are we, but God the whole,<sup>o</sup>  
Who gives us life, and animating soul.  
For Nature cannot from a part derive  
That being which the whole can only give:  
He perfect, stable; but imperfect we, 1040  
Subject to change, and different in degree;  
Plants, beasts, and man; and, as our organs are,  
We more or less of his perfection share.  
But, by a long descent, the ethereal fire  
Corrupts; <sup>o</sup> and forms, the mortal part, expire. 1045  
As he withdraws his virtue,<sup>o</sup> so they pass,  
And the same matter makes another mass:<sup>o</sup>  
This law the omniscient Power was pleased to give,  
That every kind should by succession<sup>o</sup> live;  
That individuals die, his will ordains; 1050  
The propagated species still remains.  
The monarch oak, the patriarch of the trees,  
Shoots rising up, and spreads by slow degrees;  
Three centuries he grows, and three he stays,  
Supreme in state, and in three more decays: 1055  
So wears the paving pebble in the street,

And towns and towers their fatal periods° meet :  
So rivers, rapid once, now naked lie,  
Forsaken of their springs, and leave their channels  
dry.

So man, at first a drop, dilates with heat, 1060  
Then, formed, the little heart begins to beat ;  
Secret he feeds, unknowing, in the cell ;  
At length, for hatching ripe, he breaks the shell,  
And struggles into breath, and cries for aid ;  
Then helpless in his mother's lap is laid. 1065  
He creeps, he walks, and, issuing into man,  
Grudges their life from whence his own began ;  
Reckless° of laws, affects to rule alone,  
Anxious to reign, and restless on the throne ;  
First vegetive, then feels, and reasons last ; 1070  
Rich of three souls,° and lives all three to waste.  
Some thus ;° but thousands more in flower of age,  
For few arrive to run the latter stage.  
Sunk in the first, in battle some are slain,  
And others whelmed beneath the stormy main. 1075  
What makes all this, but Jupiter the king,  
At whose command we perish, and we spring ?  
Then 'tis our best, since thus ordained to die,  
To make a virtue of necessity ;°  
Take what he gives, since to rebel is vain ; 1080

The bad grows better, which we well sustain;  
And could we choose the time, and choose aright,  
'Tis best to die, our honour at the height.  
When we have done our ancestors no shame,  
But served our friends, and well secured our fame;  
Then should we wish our happy life to close, 1086  
And leave no more for fortune to dispose;  
So should we make our death a glad relief  
From future shame, from sickness, and from grief;  
Enjoying while we live the present hour, 1090  
And dying in our excellence and flower.  
'Then round our death-bed every friend should run,  
And joy us<sup>o</sup> of our conquest early won;  
While the malicious world, with envious tears,  
Should grudge our happy end, and wish it theirs. 1095  
Since then our Arcite is with honour dead,<sup>o</sup>  
Why should we mourn, that he so soon is freed,  
Or call untimely what the gods decreed?  
With grief as just a friend may be deplored,  
From a foul prison to free air restored. 1100  
Ought he to thank his kinsman or his wife,  
Could tears recall him into wretched life?  
Their sorrow hurts themselves; on him is lost,  
And worse than both, offends his happy ghost.  
What then remains, but after past annoy 1105

To take the good vicissitude of joy ; °  
To thank the gracious gods for what they give,  
Possess our souls, and, while we live, to live ?  
Ordain we then two sorrows to combine,  
And in one point the extremes of grief to join ;      1110  
That thence resulting joy may be renewed,  
As jarring notes in harmony conclude.  
Then I propose that Palamon shall be  
In marriage joined with beauteous Emily ;  
For which already I have gained the assent      1115  
Of my free people in full parliament.  
Long love to her has borne the faithful knight,  
And well deserved, had Fortune done him right :  
'Tis time to mend her fault, since Emily  
By Arcite's death from former vows is free ;      1120  
If you, fair sister, ratify the accord,  
And take him for your husband and your lord,  
'Tis no dishonour to confer your grace  
On one descended from a royal race ;  
And were he less, yet years of service past      1125  
From grateful souls exact reward at last.  
Pity is Heaven's and yours ; nor can she find  
A throne so soft as in a woman's mind."  
He said ; she blushed ; and as o'erawed by might,  
Seemed to give Theseus what she gave the knight.      1130

Then, turning to the Theban, thus he said :  
“ Small arguments are needful to persuade  
Your temper to comply with my command : ”  
And speaking thus, he gave Emilia’s hand.  
Smiled Venus, to behold her own true knight      1135  
Obtain the conquest, though he lost the fight.  
All of a tenor was their after-life,  
No day discoloured with domestic strife ;  
No jealousy, but mutual truth believed,  
Secure repose, and kindness undeceived.      1140  
Thus Heaven, beyond the compass of his thought,  
Sent him the blessing he so dearly bought.  
So may the Queen of Love long duty bless,  
And all true lovers find the same success.

## APPENDIX A



### DRYDEN'S DEDICATION TO "PALAMON AND ARCITE"

DRYDEN lived in the earlier days of the Age of Patronage in the history of English letters. At that time, and for some time to come, it was difficult for the writer to earn an independence by his pen. Shakespeare and a few of his fellow-playwrights had been able to gain respectable, though precarious, incomes by their plays; and Dryden did very well for some years by the same craft. In general, however, the man of letters had to rely on substantial backing by powerful and wealthy patrons. So it was with Dryden. He had to do much ignominious begging, and he made a "fine art" of it. He did it unblushingly in the numerous Dedications prefixed to his various volumes. In these he shows himself to be a past-master in the art of obsequious flattery, sometimes sinking to such depths of abject servility as to seem to be utterly lacking in self-respect. And yet in his personal relations with his noble and wealthy friends he was by no means so servile, but showed a somewhat sturdy independence of character. Some light is thrown upon this inconsistency between the man and the begging author by



the fact that Dryden was ingloriously following a fashion of the time, when impecunious writers tried to outdo one another in the brilliancy of their dedicatory varnish. This will not excuse him, of course; he was, in fact, one of the worst, because the most gifted, of offenders. As Dr. Johnson says in his pompous way, he was scarcely equalled "in the meanness and servility of hyperbolic adulation." However, we ought not, perhaps, to take these dedications too seriously; their extravagances were, even at the time, as they are to us, all too palpable and ridiculous.

The volume of *Fables* which contained *Palamon and Arcite*, was dedicated in Dryden's best strain of gushing flattery to the Duke of Ormond, the patronage of whose family, as he reminds the Duke, he had enjoyed for three generations. As if to make a continuance of this esteemed patronage doubly sure, he follows up this general dedication with a special dedication to the Duchess of Ormond, prefixed to *Palamon and Arcite*. This is of higher quality, and ranks as one of the very best of Dryden's attempts in this kind. Although it is packed with allusions that are obscure to the general reader, it contains the following graceful lines that merit quotation:—

TO HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF ORMOND

WITH THE FOLLOWING POEM OF

PALAMON AND ARCITE FROM CHAUCER

MADAM,

The bard who first adorned our native tongue  
Tuned to his British lyre this ancient song;

Which Homer might without a blush rehearse,  
And leaves a doubtful palm in Virgil's verse:  
He matched their beauties, where they most excel;  
Of love sung better, and of arms as well.

Vouchsafe, illustrious Ormond, to behold  
What power the charms of beauty had of old;  
Nor wonder if such deeds of arms were done,  
Inspired by two fair eyes that sparkled like your own.

If Chaucer by the best idea wrought,  
And poets can divine each other's thought,  
The fairest nymph before his eyes he set;  
And then the fairest was Plantagenet,  
Who three contending princes made her prize,  
And ruled the rival nations with her eyes;  
Who left immortal trophies of her fame,  
And to the noblest order gave the name.

Like her, of equal kindred to the throne,  
You keep her conquests, and extend your own:  
As when the stars, in their ethereal race,  
At length have rolled around the liquid space,  
At certain periods they resume their place,  
From the same point of heaven their course advance,  
And move in measures of their former dance;  
Thus, after length of ages, she returns,  
Restored in you, and the same place adorns:  
Or you perform her office in the sphere,  
Born of her blood, and make a new Platonic year.

O true Plantagenet, O race divine,  
(For beauty still is fatal to the line,)  
Had Chaucer lived that angel-face to view,  
Sure he had drawn his Emily from you;  
Or had you lived to judge the doubtful right,  
Your noble Palamon had been the knight;

And conquering Theseus from his side had sent  
Your generous lord, to guide the Theban government.

Time shall accomplish that; and I shall see  
A Palamon in him, in you an Emily.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blessed be the power which has at once restored  
The hopes of lost succession to your lord;  
Joy to the first and last of each degree,  
Virtue to courts, and, what I longed to see,  
To you the Graces, and the Muse to me.

O daughter of the Rose, whose cheeks unite  
The differing titles of the Red and White;  
Who heaven's alternate beauty well display,  
The blush of morning and the milky way;  
Whose face is Paradise, but fenced from sin;  
For God in either eye has placed a cherubin.

All is your lord's alone; even absent, he  
Employs the care of chaste Penelope.  
For him you waste in tears your widowed hours,  
For him your curious needle paints the flowers;  
Such works of old imperial dames were taught,  
Such for Ascanius fair Elissa wrought.

The soft recesses of your hours improve  
The three fair pledges of your happy love:  
All other parts of pious duty done,  
You owe your Ormond nothing but a son,  
To fill in future times his father's place,  
And wear the garter of his mother's race.

## APPENDIX B



### EXTRACTS FROM THE PREFACE TO THE "FABLES"

THESE passages are well worth reading, first, because they are a good introduction to Dryden as a prosaist and a critic; then, because they give his own and his age's attitude to Chaucer; and, further, for the sake of the information contained in them. Along with his tributes to his great forerunner, we may recall Tennyson's charming verse praising —

"Dan Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath  
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still."

'Tis with a poet as with a man who designs to build, and is very exact, as he supposes, in casting up the cost beforehand; but, generally speaking, he is mistaken in his account, and reckons short of the expense he first intended: he alters his mind as the work proceeds, and will have this or that convenience more, of which he had not thought when he began. So has it happened to me. I have built a house, where I intended but a lodge; yet with better success than

a certain nobleman, who, beginning with a dog-kennel, never lived to finish the palace he had contrived.

From translating the first of Homer's *Iliads* (which I intended as an essay to the whole work) I proceeded to the translation of the twelfth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, because it contains, among other things, the causes, the beginning, and ending of the Trojan war. Here I ought in reason to have stopped; but the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses lying next in my way, I could not balk them. When I had compassed them, I was so taken with the former part of the fifteenth book (which is the masterpiece of the whole *Metamorphoses*) that I enjoined my self the pleasing task of rendering it into English.

\* \* \* \* \*

Having done with Ovid for this time, it came into my mind that our old English poet, Chaucer, in many things resembled him, and that, with no disadvantage on the side of the modern author, as I shall endeavour to prove when I compare them; and as I am, and always have been, studious to promote the honour of my native country, so I soon resolved to put their merits to the trial, by turning some of the *Canterbury Tales* into our language, as it is now refined.

\* \* \* \* \*

With Ovid ended the golden age of the Roman tongue: from Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. The manners of the poets were not unlike: both of them were well-bred, well-natured, amorous, and libertine, at least in

their writings, it may be also in their lives. Their studies were the same, philosophy and philology. Both of them were knowing in astronomy, of which Ovid's books of the Roman feasts, and Chaucer's treatise of the Astrolabe, are sufficient witnesses. But Chaucer was likewise an astrologer, as were Virgil, Horace, Perseus, and Manilius. Both writ with wonderful facility and clearness: neither were great inventors; for Ovid only copied the Grecian fables; and most of Chaucer's stories were taken from his Italian contemporaries or their predecessors. Boccace his *Decameron* was first published; and from thence our Englishman has borrowed many of his *Canterbury Tales*; yet that of *Palamon and Arcite* was written, in all probability, by some Italian wit in a former age, as I shall prove hereafter: the tale of Grizild was the invention of Petrarch, by him sent to Boccace, from whom it came to Chaucer. *Troilus and Cressida* was also written by a Lombard author; but much amplified by our English translator, as well as beautified; the genius of our countrymen in general being rather to improve an invention, than to invent themselves; as is evident not only in our poetry, but in many of our manufactures.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the first place, as he is the father of English poetry, so I hold him in the same degree of veneration as the Grecians held Homer, or the Romans Virgil: he is a perpetual fountain of good sense; learned in all sciences; and therefore speaks properly on all subjects; as he knew what to say, so

he knows also when to leave off, a continence which is practised by few writers, and scarcely by any of the ancients, excepting Virgil and Horace.

Chaucer followed nature everywhere; but was never so bold to go beyond her: and there is a great difference of being *Poeta* and *nimis Poeta*, if we believe Catullus; as much as betwixt a modest behaviour and affectation. The verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not harmonious to us; but is like the eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*: they who lived with him, and some time after him, thought it musical; and it continues so even in our judgment, if compared with the numbers of Lydgate and Gower, his contemporaries: there is the rude sweetness of a Scotch tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who published the last edition of him; for he would make us believe the fault is in our ears, and that there were really ten syllables in a verse where we find but nine: but this opinion is not worth confuting; 'tis so gross and obvious an error, that common sense (which is a rule in everything but matters of faith and revelation) must convince the reader, that equality of numbers in every verse which we call heroic, was either not known, or not always practised in Chaucer's age. It were an easy matter to produce some thousands of his verses, which are lame for want of half a foot, and sometimes a whole one, and which no pronounciation can make otherwise. We can only say, that he lived in the infancy of our poetry, and that nothing is

brought to perfection at the first. We must be children before we grow men.

\* \* \* \* \*

He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation, in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. All his pilgrims are severally distinguished from each other; and not only in their inclinations, but in their very physiognomies and persons. Baptista Porta could not have described their natures better than by the marks which the poet gives them. The matter and manner of their tales and of their telling are so suited to their different educations, humours, and callings, that each of them would be improper in any other mouth. Even the grave and serious characters are distinguished by their several sorts of gravity: their discourses are such as belong to their age, their calling, and their breeding; such as are becoming of them, and of them only. Some of his persons are vicious, and some virtuous; some are unlearned or (as Chaucer calls them) lewd, and some are learned. Even the ribaldry of the low characters is different: the Reeve, the Miller, and the Cook are several men, and distinguished from each other, as much as the mincing lady Prioress and the broad-speaking gap-toothed Wife of Bath. But enough of this: there is such a variety of game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my choice, and



know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty. We have our forefathers and great-grandames all before us, as they were in Chaucer's days; their general characters are still remaining in mankind, and even in England, though they are called by other names than those of Monks and Friars, and Canons, and lady Abbesses, and Nuns: for mankind is ever the same, and nothing lost out of nature, though everything is altered.

\* \* \* \* \*

1 Chaucer, I confess, is a rough diamond; and must first be polished ere he shines. I deny not, likewise, that, living in our early days of poetry, he writes not always of a piece, but sometimes mingles trivial things with those of greater moment. Sometimes also, though not often, he runs riot, like Ovid, and knows not when he has said enough. . . . Having observed this redundancy in Chaucer (as it is an easy matter for a man of ordinary parts to find a fault in one of greater), I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judged unnecessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts. I have presumed farther in some places; and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true lustre, for want of words in the beginning of our language. And to this I was the more emboldened, because (if I may be permitted to say it of myself) I found I had a soul congenial to his, and that I had been conversant in the same studies. . . .

But there are other judges who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary notion. They suppose there is a certain veneration due to his old language; and that it is a little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter it. They are farther of opinion, that somewhat of his good sense will suffer in this transfusion, and much of the beauty of his thoughts will infallibly be lost, which appear with more grace in their old habit. Of this opinion was that excellent person whom I mentioned, the late Earl of Leicester. . . . Yet my reason was not convinced with what he urged against it. If the first end of a writer be to be understood, then, as his language grows obsolete, his thoughts must grow obscure:—

“*Multa renascentur quæ jam cecidere, cadentque  
Quæ nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si volet usus,  
Quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi.*”

When an ancient word for its sound and significancy deserves to be revived, I have that reasonable veneration for antiquity to restore it. All beyond this is superstition. Words are not like landmarks, so sacred as never to be removed. Customs are changed; and even statutes are silently repealed, when the reason ceases for which they were enacted. As for the other part of the argument, that his thoughts will lose of their original beauty, by the innovation of words: in the first place, not only their beauty, but their being is lost, where they are no longer understood; which is the present case. I grant that something must be

lost in all transfusion, that is, in all translations; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be lost, or at least be maimed, when it is scarce intelligible, and that but to a few. How few are there who can read Chaucer, so as to understand him perfectly! And if imperfectly, then with less profit and no pleasure. 'Tis not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I have taken these pains with him: let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand. I will go farther, and dare to add, that what beauties I lose in some places I give to others which had them not originally. But in this I may be partial to my self. Let the reader judge: and I submit to his decision. Yet I think I have just occasion to complain of them, who, because they understand Chaucer, would deprive the greater part of their countrymen of the same advantage, and hoard him up, as misers do their grandam gold, only to look on it themselves, and hinder others from making use of it. In sum, I seriously protest, that no man ever had, or can have, a greater veneration for Chaucer than my self. I have translated some part of his works, only that I might perpetuate his memory, or at least refresh it, amongst my countrymen. If I have altered him anywhere for the better, I must at the same time acknowledge that I could have done nothing without him: *Facile est inventis addere* is no great commendation; and I am not so vain to think I have deserved a greater. . . .

I prefer in our countryman, far above all his other stories, the noble poem of *Palamon and Arcite*, which is of the epic kind, and perhaps not much inferior to the *Ilias* or the *Æneis*. The story is more pleasing than either of them, the manners as perfect, the diction as poetical, the learning as deep and various, and the disposition full as artful; only it includes a greater length of time, as taking up seven years at least; but Aristotle has left undecided the duration of the action, which yet is easily reduced into the compass of a year by a narration of what preceded the return of Palamon to Athens. I had thought for the honour of our nation, and more particularly for his whose laurel, though unworthy, I have worn after him, that this story was of English growth and Chaucer's own; but I was undeceived by Boccace; for, casually looking on the end of his seventh *Giornata*, I found Dioneo (under which name he shadows himself) and Fiammetta (who represents his mistress, the natural daughter of Robert, king of Naples), of whom these words are spoken, — *Dioneo e lo Fiammetta gran pezza cantarono insieme d' Arcita, e di Palamone*: by which it appears that this story was written before the time of Boccace; but the name of its author being wholly lost, Chaucer is now become an original; and I question not but the poem has received many beauties by passing through his noble hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE		CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH HISTORY AND LITERATURE
1631	DRYDEN'S LIFE	
1650	Born Aug. 9th.	Charles I. began to reign 1625.
	[Abroad this was the age of	Milton's <i>L'Allegro</i> and <i>Il Penseroso</i> .
	(a) The great French writers --	Milton's <i>Comus</i> .
	Cornelle, 1606-1684.	Milton's <i>Lycidas</i> .
	Pascal, 1623-1642.	Ben Jonson died.
	La Fontaine, 1621-1695.	Long Parliament assembled.
	Moliere, 1622-1673.	Theatres closed.
	(b) The great painters --	Browne's <i>Religio Medici</i> .
	Rubens, 1577-1640.	Opening of the civil war between
	Vandyck, 1590-1641.	Charles I. and Parliament.
1654	Velasquez, 1599-1660.	Royalist defeat on Marston Moor.
	Rembrandt, 1607-1669.]	Milton's <i>Areopagitica</i> .
		Waller's Poems.
		Herrick's <i>Hesperides</i> .
		Charles I. beheaded.
		Cromwell subdues Ireland.
		Baxter's <i>Saints' Everlasting Rest</i> .
		Jeremy Taylor's <i>Holy Living</i> .
		Hobbes's <i>Leviathan</i> .
		Cromwell Lord Protector.
1654	Father died.	Walton's <i>Compleat Angler</i> .
	Received B.A. from Cambridge.	Cowley's Poems.

1658	Heroic Stanzas on Cromwell's Death.	1658	Cromwell dies.
1660	<i>Astræa Reduz.</i>	1660	Long Parliament restored and dissolved.
1662	Elected member of Royal Society.	1662	Charles II. The Restoration.
1663	Married Lady Elizabeth Howard.	1663	Pepys's Diary begun.
	<i>The Wild Gallant</i> , and the <i>Rival Ladies</i> , his first plays.	1663	Royal Society founded.
1666	<i>Essay on Dramatic Poesy.</i> <i>Annus Mirabilis.</i>	1665	Builer's <i>Hudibras</i> .
			Great Plague.
1670	Appointed Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal.	1666	Great fire.
1674	<i>A State of Innocence</i> , adapted from <i>Paradise Lost</i> .	1667	Victory over the Dutch.
		1669	Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> .
1679	Additional pension of one hundred pounds.	1671	Pepys's Diary closes.
1681	Assaulted in Rose Alley.	1674	Shadwell's <i>Royal Shepherdess</i> .
1682	<i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> , Part I. <i>The Medal.</i> <i>Mac Flecknoe.</i>	1675	Milton's <i>Paradise Regained</i> .
	<i>Absalom and Achitophel</i> , Part II. <i>Religio Laici.</i>		Milton died.
1683	Collector of Customs at London.		Construction of St. Paul's Cathedral, by Wren, begun.
1684	<i>Miscellanies</i> , Vol. I.	1678	Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , Part I.
		1684	Bunyan's <i>Pilgrim's Progress</i> , Part II.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE (Continued)

DRYDEN'S LIFE		CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH HISTORY AND LITERATURE
1685	<i>Miscellanies</i> , Vol. II. He becomes a Roman Catholic.	Death of Charles II. James II. crowned.
1686	<i>Ode to the Memory of Mrs. Anne Killigrew.</i>	
1687	<i>The Hind and the Panther.</i> <i>Ode to St. Cecilia.</i>	Newton's <i>Principia</i> . William and Mary invited to take throne. James flees.
1689	Lost his offices and pensions.	William and Mary crowned. Locke's <i>Letters on Toleration</i> .
1692	Busy upon translations (Juvenal, Persius, etc.).	Locke's <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> .
1693	<i>Essay on Satire.</i> <i>Miscellanies</i> , Vol. III.	Beginning of national debt.
1694	<i>Poems to Kneller and Congreve.</i> <i>Miscellanies</i> , Vol. IV.	Bank of England established.
1697	<i>Love Triumphant</i> , his last play. <i>Translation of Virgil</i> (begun in 1694). <i>Alexander's Feast.</i>	Collier's <i>Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of English Stage</i> . Addison's <i>Latin Poems</i> .
1700	<i>Fables.</i> Died May 1st.	

## THE MORE IMPORTANT REFERENCE BOOKS



### DRYDEN'S WORKS

Complete Edition: Scott's, Saintsbury's revision of same (1882).

Poems: Globe Edition by Christie (Macmillan).

Select Poems by Christie (Clarendon Press).

Selections in Ward's *British Poets*, Syle's *Milton to Tennyson*, Hales's *Longer English Poems*.

Prose: Essays on *Satire and Epic Poetry*, in No. 151 of *Cassell's National Library*.

Essay on *Dramatic Poetry* by T. Arnold (Macmillan).

### BIOGRAPHIES

Scott's, in Vol. I. of his edition of Dryden's works.

Saintsbury's, in *English Men of Letters Series*.

Johnson's, in his *Lives of the Poets*, accessible in volume of *Selected Lives*, edited by Matthew Arnold (Macmillan).

*Dictionary of National Biography*. Article by Leslie Stephen.

Christie's, prefixed to editions of poems (above).



ESSAYS

Lowell's, in *My Study Windows*.

J. Churton Collins', in *Essays and Studies*.

Macaulay's, in *Collected Essays*.

HISTORY

Garnett's *Age of Dryden*.

Taine's *History of English Literature*.

Gosse's *History of Eighteenth-Century Literature*.

Gosse's *From Shakespeare to Pope*.

Pancoast's *Introduction to English Literature*.

# NOTES



## BOOK I

1. 2. **Theseus.** One of the most famous and most interesting of the legendary heroes of Greece, whose greatest exploit was the freeing of Athens from her payment of human tribute to the monstrous Cretan Minotaur, which he slew (I., 116). Look up further details in some good classical dictionary or mythology, which is indispensable in studying this work. Gayley's *Classic Myths in English Literature* (Ginn) is a good book.

**Prince. Chief.** Chaucer calls him "duk," in the old sense of "leader."

1. 6. Dryden omits some of Chaucer's picturesque anachronisms, as, *e.g.*, that this was done by "his wisdom and his chivalry." Throughout the poem there is a quaint mingling of classical story and mediæval detail and coloring (*e.g.* the "tilts and turneys" in 22), which reminds one of similar admixtures in the naïve pictures of the earlier Italian artists. One comes to enjoy it.

1. 7. **warrior Queen.** Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons. Those who have read Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* will recall her and Theseus.

l. 12. **to friend.** Cf. Bible English, "he took her to wife."

l. 13. Note the first triplet. In Dryden's time the triplet was indicated by a brace, which served to give notice of a change from the couplet form. In some cases, this among them, the effect of the triplet is quite happy. The verse has gathered an impetus which is carried over into a second strengthening rhyme, heightening the effect and more fully rounding out the sentiment.

l. 14. **I pass.** The speaker is the knight, whose story this is. He is one of the pilgrims from London to Canterbury, who had met overnight at the Tabard Inn, Southwark, to be ready to start early on the morrow. Mine host of the Tabard has suggested to his miscellaneous company of wayfarers that they shall beguile the time on their journey by telling, each of them, two stories, going and returning; and that he who tells the best shall be treated to a supper by the rest on their return to the Inn (ll. 31-33). The knight's is the first of *The Canterbury Tales*.

l. 25. Cf. our colloquialism, "I've a good deal of ground to cover."

l. 29. **accidents.** Happenings in the sense of the Latin word (*accidere*), from which it is derived. Notice that in Dryden, as in Pope, words of Latin derivation more nearly resemble their Latin originals in meaning than they do to-day.

l. 36. **mended with a new.** Beaten by a better one.

l. 41. **a quire.** A company.

ll. 40 and 45. What change from the normal metre? Do you perceive its effectiveness?

1. 46. **his feet embraced.** As suppliants always did ; that was good etiquette in Homer's time, as you will remember if you have read your Pope.

1. 50. **triumph.** Triumphal procession or progress.

**weeds.** As in our colloquial "widow's weeds." Milton's line gives us both words : —

"In weeds of peace high triumphs hold." — *L'Allegro*, 120.

1. 56. **swoundéd.** Swooned. One often hears the old form. "drowndéd."

1. 64. **The first hexameter line, or Alexandrine.** This metre was first effectively used by Spenser to round off his stanza with a fuller sound. Dryden followed Cowley's lead in introducing it into heroic verse. How do you like its effect here and elsewhere in the poem ?

1. 76. **Capaneus.** See the story of the *Seven against Thebes*. He had boasted that he would scale the walls of Thebes in spite of Jupiter, who struck him with a thunderbolt as he made the attempt.

1. 85. **While so unburied the souls of the dead wandered homeless.**

1. 94. **as. As if.** Common in Shakespeare.

1. 98. **crew.** Company. Still so used (*e.g.* of a picnic party) in parts of New England. Do you recall Milton's use in *L'Allegro* ?

1. 108. **The signal that summoned to fight**

l. 109. **argent field.** White ground; heraldic terms. The white symbolized silver (*argent*).

l. 110. Mars in his chariot (Chaucer has "carte").

l. 115. **pennon.** Scott, learned in such matters, points out that Theseus bears both the banner, a large square flag which only barons had the right to display, and the pennon, a forked streamer, borne by knights.

l. 117. **generous rage.** Lively excitement. Cf. colloquialism which says of a thing that "it's all the rage."

l. 123. **process.** Progress. Cf. Tennyson in *Locksley Hall*:—"And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."

l. 131. **I spare.** What words are understood?

l. 132. **howling.** This word, used in the Bible, had a dignity which has departed from it.

ll. 142-143. Chaucer is not responsible for this curious plight and strange achievement of the knights. This is Dryden's padding.

l. 147. **equal arms.** Similarly equipped. They were "brothers in arms," who had vowed to stand by each other to the death.

l. 150. **wound.** A good ear-rhyme with "ground" in Dryden's time.

l. 158. **softly.** Gently. Cf. Shakespeare, *e.g.* "But soft!"

l. 159. **known of Creon's line.** Known to be related to Creon. Hence the punishment.

l. 169. **the morn of cheerful May.** May-day morn.

Charming as are the lines that follow, they do not match the beautiful, fresh simplicity of Chaucer, whose verse takes on bright color wherever he speaks of the springtide. Dryden pads not a little: the allusions to Aurora and Philomel are his. For ll. 197-200 Chaucer has simply:—

“And as an aungel hevenlyche she song.”

l. 177. In “Merrie England” it was the custom, on the eve of May, for the people to go out in picnic parties into the woods and groves to spend the night in revelry and pastimes. They returned the next morning with branches and greenery to deck their homes.

l. 204. The passage is not clear. It may mean that the tower formed a side or section of the quadrangular castle wall.

l. 214. **hateful**. In the primitive sense of full of, or filled with, hate. So the word “dreadful” was used.

l. 215. Spires on the Greek temples! The combination is familiar enough to us. You may recall some New England church.

l. 232. **inevitable**. What does the word imply?

ll. 233-236. Again, by expanding, Dryden misses the poignant, suggestive force of Chaucer:—

“And therwithal he bleynte [blenched] and cryede, a!  
As though he stongen were unto the herte.”

So simple and yet so effective! We feel the quick pain in it.

l. 240. **cheer**. Countenance, mien.

l. 242. **alone is**. Is merely.

**l. 245. horoscope.** Dryden, who believed in astrology, multiplies and nearly always amplifies Chaucer's astrological allusions. Astrology was based on the belief that a man's fate was determined by the position of the stars at his birth. The horoscope was the astrologer's plan of the heavens, especially of the most influential planets and luminaries, — the Moon, the Sun, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn (like Mars, an evil influence).

**l. 248. under earth.** Below the horizon.

**l. 256. insensible.** What must the word mean here?

**l. 258. Actæon.** The unfortunate youth who, having accidentally sighted Diana while she was bathing, was revengefully turned by her into a stag, and was killed by his own dogs.

**l. 260. Juno.** Queen of the Gods, consort of Jupiter.

**l. 261. Cyprian queen.** Venus, goddess of love and beauty, who was chiefly worshipped in her favorite home in Cyprus (hence "Cyprian"). The whole passage is Dryden's, and is very Drydenesque and un-Chaucerian in style. Line 261 is striking, but it is not Chaucer.

**l. 262. confess.** Reveal.

**l. 264. habit.** Dress. Cf. "riding-habit."

**ll. 272-281.** Let us see how Chaucer manages the situation: —

"And with that sighte hire beautee hurte him so,  
**That** if that Palamon was wounded **soe**,  
**Arcite** is hurt as moche as he, or **more**;  
 And with a sigh he seyde pitously:  
**The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly**

Of hire that rometh in the yonder place,  
 And but I have hire mercy and hire grace,  
 That I may seen hire atté leestè weye  
 I nam but deed; ther nis no more to seye."

After the directness and reality of that, Dryden, with his fatal dart, poisonous eyes, and death-dealing glances, won't do at all. Even such a line as

"The beauty I behold has struck me dead"

is a sorry substitute for Chaucer's

"The fressshé beautee sleeth me sodeynly."

l. 296. Here we are face to face with the tragic issue involved in the poem; the severance of one of those passionate friendships, of which that of Achilles and Patroclus, which you will have read of in your Pope's *Iliad*, is a classic instance. "Such comradeship," says a modern writer, who comes beautifully to our aid here, "though instances of it are to be found everywhere, is still especially a classical motive; Chaucer expressing the sentiment of it so strongly in an antique tale, that one knows not whether the love of both Palamon and Arcite for Emelya, or of those two for each other, is the chieffer subject of the *Knight's Tale*—

"He cast his eyen upon Emelya,  
 And therwithal he bleynte and criéd, ah!  
 As that he stongen were unto the herte."

What reader does not refer part of the bitterness of that cry to the spoiling, already foreseen, of the fair friendship which had hitherto made the prison of the two lads sweet with its daily offices, though the friendship is saved at last?—WALTER PATER, *The Renaissance*, p. 9.



l. 299. **plain.** Field of fight, the lists.

l. 300. **appeach.** Impeach.

l. 301. **of my council.** In my counsel or confidence (see also l. 308).

l. 306. **pretence.** Pretensions or claims, as when we speak of a claimant to a throne as a pretender.

l. 309. **eldership.** Priority. See l. 324, where **elder than** means prior to. In poetry "eld" is often found for "old."

ll. 315-322. What is Arcite's point? Do you think it well taken?

l. 320. Mind the emphasis in reading.

ll. 327-336. Drydenesque in style. There is nothing quite so simply conclusive as Chaucer's

"A man moot needes love maugre his heed."

Spenser expresses the same sentiment:—

"Ne may love be compelled by maistery" (force).

ll. 329-332. Be sure of the meaning; try a paraphrase. By **vindicate the common cause** is probably meant "justify the common view that nature sanctions this disregard of merely human laws."

l. 342. **Æsop's hounds.** The dogs in Æsop's fable.

l. 346. **justle for a grant.** Jostle, or vie with, one another for a favor.

l. 351. **adventure.** Venture. Cf. l. 399.

ll. 354-357. These are Dryden's heroics. What about l. 357?

l. 358. There is a certain appositiveness in this allusion to the bosom friendship of Theseus and Pirithous. Chaucer had in mind perhaps Theseus' journey to Hades with his friend to aid him in carrying off Proserpina.

ll. 358-378. It is in such paragraphs as these, where no poetic heights are to be scaled, that Dryden does his work well. But there is a lapse again in the next paragraph. There is more feeling and strength in Chaucer.

l. 380. **for his life must pay.** Expand this.

l. 382. **Finds his dear purchase.** Realizes the high price paid for freedom.

l. 383. **in prison pent.** The meaning is not clear. What words seem to be understood?

ll. 389-390. These lines are virtually Dryden's. What do you think of them?

l. 404. **extremest line.** Puzzling. Was Dryden hard put for a rhyme? It seems to mean that, although he was in the last extremity of love, as loving hopelessly, yet Palamon could at least love with the satisfaction of seeing his beloved.

l. 412. **care.** Meaning here? Cf. care-worn; also II., 35.

l. 416. The negatives **nor . . . nor** have not been led up to by negatives in ll. 414-415.

ll. 420-441. Dryden does well here, although he expands by way of illustration. The weakest line is 439.

l. 427. **guilty of their vows.** Supposed to be an Englishing of Virgil's phrase *Voti reus* (*Æn.*, V., 237) = when under the obligation of a vow.

l. 441. **starve**. In old and Chaucerian English = die, perish.  
Cf. German *sterben*.

l. 444. **knew**. Change of tense here and in following lines.  
The poem affords several instances.

ll. 445-449. Such emotional demonstrations were natural to the ancients as to some southern peoples to-day, and were not regarded as unmanly.

l. 445. **outrageous**. Note primitive significance of the word here.

l. 447. Note the onomatopœia ; so in Chaucer :—

“Such sorwe he maketh that the gretè tour  
Resowneth of his yollyng and clamour.”

l. 453. **proud of**. Elated at.

l. 457. **vindicate**. Revenge ; cf. vindictive.

l. 459. **peace**. What about the rhyme ? Do you find many poor rhymes in the poem ? Beware of overlooking pronunciations peculiar to Dryden's age, *e.g.* joined (= jined) and mind, — above, ll. 454-455.

l. 464. Cf. Chaucer :—

“Therwith the fyr of jelousye upsterte  
Withinne his breste, and hente him by the herte.”

l. 469. **constrains**. Meaning here ?

l. 474. Supply word understood. Cf. poetic expression  
“what time” = at the time when.

l. 475. **his**. Whose ? Antecedent ?

l. 484. **estate**. State. Think of other words that sometimes drop the prefix in this way.

1. 485. **Meaning?** Paraphrase.

1. 492. Supply after "at," "a traveller," — the common object of "shoot at," and "forelays," as the two following lines suggest.

1. 493. **forelays.** Waylays.

1. 495. **thrids.** Commonly used for threads.

1. 498. **Through Saturn.** See ll. 246–247. **seated.** In what sense used?

1. 499. **Cadmus,** founder of Thebes, had incurred the enmity of Juno and Mars.

1. 500. **quartil.** Astrological term, denoting that the two planets were at an angle of  $90^\circ$  — an indication of ill in this instance, causing the jealousy of the two knights.

1. 515. **but.** **Except.** Is not the play on words a little out of place?

ll. 518–542. Dryden takes great liberties with Chaucer in this paragraph. He is off in his heroics, or mock-heroics, again. Chaucer is much quieter and stronger. For a striking contrast in the style of the two poets, turn, after conning Chaucer, to ll. 524–531, with all their bathos.

1. 524. **stupid.** Meaning here?

1. 530. **receives.** Takes on.

1. 531. **boxen.** Box tree. Old adjective in *en*. Cf. wooden, golden, etc.

1. 535. **A charming touch in Chaucer's simple speech:—**

"And if he herdé song or instrument  
Then wolde he wepe . . ."

One is reminded of Jessica's —

“I am never merry when I hear sweet music.”

l. 540. **trim.** Dress, ornament. Cf. “trimming,” and for a survival of the noun, our phrase, “I am in good trim.”

l. 541. **musful.** Meaning?

l. 542. **rage.** Madness.

l. 547. **Hermes.** Mercury, messenger of the gods, familiar to us with his winged heels and cap, and magical rod or staff, in the well-known statue of the flying Mercury. As to how he succeeded in putting to sleep the hundred-eyed Argus, consult the classical dictionary.

l. 558. This premonition of death is due to Dryden. No such sense of ultimate fate hangs upon Chaucer's Arcite. Which treatment is the better? Why?

\* l. 576. **conscious.** Meaning here? What should we say to-day?

l. 578. **thick resort.** What is the figure?

l. 579. Scan this line.

l. 584. **still.** Always, as often used in Shakespeare, the Bible, Milton.

l. 587. **engines.** Any sort of mechanical contrivances.

l. 590. **Philostratus.** The name signifies “subdued by love.”

l. 593. **gentle of condition.** Chaucer's phrase. Gentle = noble, well-bred, as in our word “gentleman.” Cf. “gentry.”

l. 601. **menial.** Doubtless in the Chaucerian sense of household attendants or suite. Chaucer says that the king made him

a "squire of the chamber" — note the mediævalism. Chaucer has a line in this poem in which he speaks of a man —

"That in his house is of his *meyne* slain."

Cf. III., 539. first. Foremost, chief.

l. 602. entertained. Rewarded.

ll. 607-608. Construe.

## BOOK II

l. 10. Dryden's line. Again shows his astrological bent. It means: When in May the sun had entered that sign of the zodiac known as Gemini, the Twins.

l. 12. Dryden here puts into terms of scholastic philosophy Chaucer's simple —

"As, when a thing is schapen [ordained], it shall be."

l. 18. sleepy draught. Figure? *Draught* pronounced in Dryden's time to rhyme with "brought."

l. 19. secure. Untroubled. Cf. Milton's "secure delight." *L'Allegro*, 91.

l. 22. next. Old meaning of "nearest."

l. 25. feared the day. Meaning?

l. 28. Is any noticeable effect gained by the triplet here?

l. 34. style. Pen, from Latin *stylus*, used for writing on tablets of wax.

ll. 37-62. When it comes to descriptions of nature, we naturally suspect town-loving Dryden, who, like Pope, Johnson, and indeed most English poets from about 1650-1750, had little

feeling for nature. On the other hand, Chaucer was especially sensitive to the delights of springtide. When he writes of April or May, his pulse seems to beat faster. What a poor reflection we have here of Chaucer's freshness:—

“The bisy larkè, messenger of day,  
 Salueth in his song the morwè gray,  
 And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte  
 That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,  
 And with his stremés dryeth in the greves  
 The silver dropés, hongynge on the leues.”

ll. 53-62. Dryden greatly lengthens Arcite's song, in modern operatic style. In Chaucer his heart-easing snatch is of three lines:—

“May, with alle thy flourés and thy grene,  
 Welcomé be thou, fairé, fressshè May,  
 I hope that I som grené getè may.”

Would Arcite be likely to indulge in a lengthy apostrophe? Think of his character and the occasion.

l. 51. **against.** Toward. Cf. Milton's—

“Right against the eastern gate.”—*L'Allegro*, 59.

l. 58. **sultry tropic.** Tropic of Cancer, which the sun nears in June, appearing to move more slowly.

l. 63. **addressed.** Ellipsis; supply words understood.

ll. 73-74. The two “for's” are a little awkward—an instance of Dryden's careless workmanship. What does the first “for” mean?

l. 84. **Friday.** Freya's day. Freya = Norse Venus. Cf. French, *Vendredi* = Venus's day.

l. 88. **angry Juno.** the jealous Queen (92). See I., 499 and note.

l. 93. **the Theban city was.** Imitative of Virgil's famous *fuit Ilium* (*Æn.*, II., 325). *Was* = once was; has ceased to be.

l. 103. **That side of heaven.** May be astrological in significance, but more probably means those deities who side with Juno and Mars.

l. 112. **fries.** This word, frequently used by Dryden, was not so undignified in his time as it is with us.

l. 113. **my fate pursue.** Hurry me toward the fate predestined for me and my race. Cf. Chaucer:—

“Ye slen [slay] me with youre eyen, Emelye.”

l. 114. **the rest.** Whom?

ll. 115–116. Dryden calmly reproduces two lines from a song by Thomas Carew. Scan 115. Note the faulty rhythm, unlike Dryden. *Record* accented on second syllable. Cf. II., 304.

ll. 119–120. Cf. Chaucer:—

“And with that word he fell down in a trauunce  
A long time.”

l. 120. **A flagrant instance of change of tense.**

l. 141. **knew.** Recognized. In what common phrase does this meaning survive?

l. 147. The following lines recall sentiments expressed by Arcite once before. Has he a less noble character than Palamon?



l. 152. **have my faith.** Take my troth.

“Have heer my trouthe.” — CHAUCER.

ll. 160–161. Chaucer's Arcite does not swagger in any such fashion. He has more knightly courtesy, allowing that perhaps Palamon may win —

“And if so be that thou my lady wyne,  
And sle me in this woode there I am inne,  
Thou maist well han thy lady as for me.”

l. 188. **generous chillness.** Noble coolness, calm self-possession.

ll. 192–193. Chaucer is more suggestively simple : —

“Everych [each] of hem help for to armen other  
As friendly as he were his ownè brother.”

How many times before had they done this service for each other ! It is a grim, yet pathetic situation.

l. 196. **foin.** Thrust. These details are Dryden's, as we might guess. So, too, ll. 206–209.

l. 224. **jolly.** Joyful. Cf. Milton's

“While the jolly hours lead on propitious May.”

— *Sonnet to the Nightingale.*

l. 232. **Diana.**

l. 235. **laund.** Lawn, open space or bushy plain surrounded by woods.

l. 237. **forth-right.** Straightway, “right away.”

l. 241. **underneath the sun.** Chaucer's phrase : a realistic touch. Where was the sun ?

l. 245. **strook.** Old past tense of “strike.”

l. 251. **Meaning?**

l. 258. **listed field.** Field marked out and enclosed (listed) for combat. Cf. Shakespeare's

"Rather than so, come fate into the list,  
And champion me." — *Macbeth*, III., i., 71.

l. 261. **Is Palamon more fitly the spokesman than Arcite?**

l. 292. **Ellipsis;** supply words understood.

l. 309. Dryden expands in the next two paragraphs. Cf. especially Chaucer's three lines for Dryden's, 309-314:—

"The queen anon for verray wommanhede  
Gan for to wepe, and so dede Emelye,  
And alle the ladies in the compaignye."

Note the Drydenesque pompousness in l. 313.

l. 318. **mastership.** Masterpiece.

l. 338. **he freed.** Who? Whom? Change of subject.

l. 340. **under.** Down, as in some compounds.

l. 350. Cf. Chaucer:—

"The god of love, a! *benedicite*,  
How mighty and how grete a lord is he!"

Again, what delightful simplicity!

l. 387. **accord.** Understanding, agreement.

l. 408. **every sign.** Twelve signs of the zodiac = a year. Chaucer says, "This day fyfty wykes."

l. 414. **bars.** Barriers, bounds, lists.

i. 415. **recreant.** Confess defeat, generally implying cowardice, as in Shakespeare's use and Scott's.

l. 430. Note the peculiarity in this line — the ending of a sentence in the middle of the line. This interferes with the swing and speed of the couplet. Dryden avoided this effect. Note how few the instances are. Cf. Pope's versification in his translation of the *Iliad*.

l. 435. Here is obviously one of the natural divisions of the story that calls for the beginning of a new book. What are the other natural divisions ?

l. 445. **degrees.** Steps. Chaucer's word ; comes through French from Latin, *gradus*. Cf. grade, gradually.

l. 448. Note how detailed and sumptuous the following descriptions are. Chaucer seemed to delight in the richness, the color, and magnificence of all he describes. Remember that in Chaucer's time men were emerging from the gloom and asceticism of the Middle Ages, and opening their eyes in rapture to the beauty of the world. What a childlike wonder and joy Chaucer shows !

l. 460. **An altar.** Chaucer adds an oratory, or small chapel — an interesting combination, so suggestive as the second is of cathedrals and Christian piety. The next line is Dryden's.

l. 462. **dome.** Building = Latin *domus*. So used in Pope and Goldsmith.

“The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign.

— *Deserted Village*, 319.

l. 474. The student who has followed Chaucer's narrative will by this time detect such un-Chaucerian touches as we get in this line, in l. 476, and elsewhere in this passage. How much elaborated is Chaucer's simple —

“The broken slepés, and the sykés [sighs] colde ;  
 The sacred teerés, and the waymentynge [wailing]  
 The fyry strokés, and the desiryng  
 That lovés servauntz in this lyf enduren.”

l. 483. **Sigils.** Seals engraved with planetary signs.

l. 487. **suffused.** With color, discolored. Chaucer's figure of jealousy is very different:—

“That weredé of yelwé guldés [marigolds] a gerland.”

Do you think that Dryden's jaundiced woman is better ?

l. 489. **A cuckow** is a bird of traditionally bad reputation, being above all things a deceiver. The way in which she deceives other birds by substituting her own for their eggs in their nests, is well known.

l. 498. **Idalian mount.** In Cyprus, sacred to Venus. **Citheron.** Range of mountains south of Thebes, sacred to the gods. Spelt differently in III., 145. Chaucer seems to have had Cythœra in mind, the Ionian island sacred to Venus.

l. 502. **Narcissus.** The beautiful youth who loved, until he pined away, his own image reflected in a pool.

l. 503. **Samson and Solomon.** Note this strange admixture of Scriptural names. Chaucer has Hercules instead of Samson. Samson's case, however, is equally pertinent, and makes Solomon a less solitary patch of glaring, foreign color.

l. 505. **Medea**, who by her sorcery helped Jason on the Argonautic Expedition. **Circe.** Recall Ulysses' visit to her in the *Odyssey*.

l. 519. **turtles.** Turtle-doves, sacred to Venus. Chaucer

has "dowvés." **buxom**. Generally means complaisant, obedient; here has sense of yielding. Cf. Milton's

"So buxom, blithe, and debonair." — *L'Allegro*, 24.

l. 520. **an infant Love**. Chaucer says her son, Cupid.

l. 526. **This temple**. Pictured on the wall.

l. 527. **the first in Thrace**. The first or original temple that stood in Thrace—one of the wildest, bleakest regions of Greece.

ll. 528–541. Note the expressiveness of this little landscape. Chaucer is more vividly concise, after the manner of the greatest masters. Note the feeling, the onomatopoetic effect, in his lines picturing the forest; sight and sound combining:—

"With knotty, knarry [gnarled], barreyne treës olde  
Of stubbës sharpe and hidous to byholde,  
In which ther ran a swymbel [moaning] in a swough [wind-storm]  
As though a storm schulde bersten every bough."

l. 536. **knares**. Gnarls. See the first of Chaucer's lines above.

l. 544. **bent**. Sense here?

l. 545. **armipotent**. Dissect for the meaning.

l. 549. **Blind**. The context shows the meaning in this as in so many of the instances in which familiar words are somewhat strangely used. Cf. "a blind alley."

l. 552. Note the suggestive touch—the cold, northern light. Cf. Chaucer:—

"The northern light in at the dorés shoon;  
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon."

The lines that follow in Chaucer convey in a wonderfully graphic way the sense of bare, irresistible strength.

l. 558. **tun.** Huge cask, denoting the girth of the pillars.

ll. 565-566. No better instance can be found of Dryden's unfortunate weakening of Chaucer's strongest lines. How incomparably finer is Chaucer's

"The smylere [smiling villain] with the knyf under the cloke."

Cf. also Chaucer's version of ll. 568-570: —

"Contek, with bloody knyf and sharpe manace."

l. 576. **yet.** Meaning? \*

l. 589. **boars.** In Chaucer, "bears." Which is better? Why?

l. 590. **overlaid.** Smothered.

l. 592. **Mars his nature.** This was the mistaken way in which, for a time, the possessive case was expressed, especially with words ending in "s." Our possessive ending, with an apostrophe, is not a contraction of "his," but a survival of an old inflected genitive in "es."

l. 600. **conquest.** Chaucer reverts to personification = the blood-stained victor. Why the suspended sword in l. 602?

l. 604. **Mars his ides.** On the ides of March, when Cæsar was assassinated. Recall the facts in Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar*.

l. 607. **Antony.** Mark Antony, whose love for Cleopatra led to his undoing.

l. 608. **fane.** Temple; Latin *fanum*.

l. 611. **the red star.** The planet Mars.

l. 614. **geomantic figures.** Figures outlined in dots on the ground, or, at a later time, on paper; geomancy being the art of divination by means of such dotted figures. The two figures so dotted in stars on the painting above Mars's head are named by Chaucer Puella (the maid) and Rubens (the warrior). The next line is Dryden's addition. It means that one figure, the warrior, was astrologically important when Mars moved "direct," i.e. from east to west, or with the signs of the zodiac; the other, the maid, when Mars's motion was backward.

l. 616. Review for a moment this gallery of scenes of disaster and horror, and figures of baseness and crime connected with "mighty Mars the red," to realize the harrowing, chilling power of the passage. Note also that it is preceded and followed by the pleasing picturings connected with the temples of Venus and Diana.

l. 621. **Cynthia.** Diana. Why so called? And why silver Cynthia?

l. 623. **Calisto.** One of Diana's nymphs. Her fate is more clearly told by Chaucer:—

"Whan that Dyane agrevéd was with here,  
Was turnéd from a womman to a bere,  
And after was she maad the loodé-sterre."

**manifest of shame.** A Latinism, easily deciphered.

l. 625. **Her son.** Arcas, who was appropriately placed in the Little Bear.

l. 626. **cold circle.** Arctic circle, within which are both constellations.

l. 627. **Actæon.** See I., 258.

l. 630. **mistaken master.** Figure? Convert it.

l. 631. **Peneian Daphne.** The nymph, daughter of the river-god Peneus, who, when pursued by enamoured Apollo, was changed by Diana into a laurel-tree, thereafter sacred to the sun-god.

l. 633. Meaning? Paraphrase it. The word "expressed" has been so used before.

ll. 634-638. The chief incidents connected with the hunting of the fierce boar sent by Diana to ravage Calydon, to punish King Æneus for a slight. Ænides, the king's son, slew the beast, and presented his envied prize to the fleet huntress Atalanta, who had fascinated him by her beauty. In a contest over the prize, Ænides slew his mother's brothers, hence "Diana's vengeance," wrought out through his "murdress mother," who burned a log upon which his life depended, and he was "consumed" as it wasted away.

l. 639. **the Volscian queen.** Camilla, who led the Volscians against Æneas. The soldier ("traitor") who slew her was avenged by Diana.

ll. 643-652. Is this delightful image of the huntress-queen clear in the mind? It will doubtless recall a well-known statue; but here we must add color, the "gaudy green" of her hunting dress.

l. 644. **beagles.** Hunting dogs.

l. 652. **The dark dominions.** The underworld, Hades, where she ruled for part of the year.



l. 654. **Lucina.** Roman name for Diana, as goddess of childbirth = light-bringer.

l. 658. **mend.** Probably "make amends for."

ll. 661-662. Dryden's own sly "tag," a bid for royal recompense.

l. 663. **Scan.**

### BOOK III

Here we have all the pomp and circumstance of a great gala of the age of chivalry — the splendid procession of the flower of knighthood, dukes, earls, and kings, all

" — gadred in this noble companye  
For love and for encrees of chivalrye."

Note the sequence of events. After the Sunday pageant, the magnificent entertainment of Theseus — the minstrelsy, the service at the feast, the dancing in the hall, where the hawks are perched above and the hounds lie about the floor — follows the silence of midnight and of the later dawning, when we hear the impassioned prayers of the two heroes and of Emily; and then come the bustle and clatter of preparation on the morn of May; the progress of the contesting bands to the scene of conflict; and at last the clash of arms and the dust of the onset. We cannot but admire the admirable evolution of the story, the skilful ordering of the details, the tactful setting of the central figures.

ll. 7-8. Supply the ellipses.

ll. 9-10. A little misleading through the use of "beside" for "besides," and the expansion of the subject. Paraphrase.

ll. 16-21. The knight who tells the story cannot repress his enthusiasm and patriotism. Dryden outdoes Chaucer here.

ll. 20-21. The meaning is a little difficult. Try a paraphrase.

l. 23. **Approved.** Meaning? Cf. Shakespeare:—

“In religion  
What damned error but some sober brow  
Will bless it ~~and~~ approve it with a text?”

— *Merchant of Venice*, III., ii., 79.

l. 24. **several.** ~~D~~ifferent, distinctive. Originally it meant separate, and was used in the singular. Cf. Milton:—

“Which he, to grace his tributary gods,  
By course commits to several government.”

— *Comus*, 24-25.

l. 27. **stubborn.** In its primitive sense of tough and resisting as a stub.

l. 28. **jupon.** French *jupon*, a short, close-fitting coat.

l. 31. **Pruce.** Prussia. Of course Theseus knew nothing of Prussia, but Chaucer is using the word for descriptive purposes, and explains and protects himself by saying, after Solomon:—  
“There nys [is not] no newè gyse [fashion], that it nas [was not once] old.”

l. 35. **jambeux.** French for leg-armor. The costuming is frankly mediæval.

l. 39. **Lycurgus.** Not, of course, the Spartan lawgiver.

l. 43. **a lion.** Chaucer says a griffin; Emetrius is “as a lyon.”

l. 57. **pards.** Leopards. Cf. Shakespeare’s “bearded like the pard.”—*As You Like It*, II., vii., 150.

ll. 63-89. Note how skilfully contrasted with Lyeurgus. Each is forcibly realized ; each a study of personality, and no mere decorated dummy.

l. 68. **orient**. Shining, lustrous. Cf. Milton:—

“ His orient liquor in a crystal glass.” — *Comus*, 65.

ll. 79-81. This is Dryden on stilts again. Line 81 is especially un-Chaucerian.

ll. 82-85. Cf. Chaucer:—

“ Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.

His berd was wel bygonné for to sprynge;

His voys was as a trumpè thunderynge.”

l. 89. **reclaimed**. Tamed. Cf. “reclaimed from savagery,” a common phrase.

l. 96. **increase**. Furtherance, growth, glorification.

l. 100. **honest**. In the Latin sense of *honestus* = noble, splendid.

l. 101. **the war**. Warriors. Cf. somewhat similar use of “the camp.”

l. 103. **prime**. Early, the first quarter of the day. Cf. the phrase, “the first of the week” = early in the week. In Shakespeare and elsewhere the prime = the spring.

l. 104. **Scan**. Some versions have “pots” for “posts.”

ll. 111-118. Dryden cuts a good deal here, and we lose a pretty piece of local color. Chaucer tells of:—

“The mynstralcy, the servyce at the feste,

The greté gyftés to the moste and leste,

The riche array of Theseus paleys [palace],

Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,

What ladyes fayrest ben or best daunsynge,  
Or which of hem can dauncé best and singe,  
Ne who most felyngly speketh of love;  
What haukés sitten on the perche above,  
What houndés liggen on the flour adoun."

ll. 119-123. Dryden is again too wordy:—

"The Sonday night, or day bigan to springe,  
When Palamon the larke herdé synge,  
Although it were not day by hourés two,  
Yit sang the larke, and Palamon also."

Note the beautiful brevity and suggestiveness of the last line.

l. 124. **preventig.** In primitive Latin sense of going before, anticipating. Collate instances in Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible.

l. 129. **genial.** Life-giving, fruitful; as when we speak of the "genial rays of the sun."

ll. 130-144. This pretty flattery is Dryden's. Chaucer's Palamon is too full of his own hopes and fears to indulge in such a flight. Are they dramatically appropriate?—that is the first question to be asked concerning Dryden's decorative additions. Chaucer's instinct is so much finer than Dryden's, in spite of the latter's long years of dramatic activity.

l. 146. **Increase.** Offspring, progeny.

l. 147. **Adonis.** The beautiful youth whom Venus loved in vain.

ll. 159-160. What is the significance of this avowal of Palamon's? Has he a premonition that he cannot win by force of arms?

l. 168. Dryden's astrology again. Each of the five planets — Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus — was, in the Ptolemaic system, placed in a sphere or orb. The orb of Venus was properly the third.

l. 172. **the Sisters.** The Fates; "the Sisters Three" in Shakespeare — where?

ll. 173-174. Isn't this something like anticlimax?

ll. 177-178. Note how much is lost when Dryden departs from Chaucer's definiteness and concreteness — the life and soul of poetry — as he frequently does: —

"Then paye I the [thee] to-morwè with a spere  
That Arcita me thurgh the herté bere."

ll. 187-188. Paraphrase.

l. 189. What artistic effect is gained by thus interposing Emily's speech between those of the heroes?

l. 190. A very Chaucerian line, exactly reproduced; but it needs the Chaucerian context if one is to get its fine flavor. The charm of such simple writing defies analysis. One feels it, or one does not.

l. 200. **Uncouth.** Perhaps unknown, although it suggests also ill-mannered, boorish, indelicate. Cf. Milton's

"Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills."

— *Lycidas*, 186.

l. 207. Chaucer presents us with no such neglectful maid; on the contrary, her hair was "kempt," but "all untressed."

l. 208. **mastless.** Without acorns or mast.

1. 210. **either.** In old sense of "both." Cf. phrase "on either hand."

1. 212. **Statius.** A Roman poet; wrote the *Thebais*, an epic about Thebes.

1. 221. **Niobe.** She who boasted that, having fourteen children, she was superior to the goddess Latona, who had only two. Latona thereupon commanded these two, Apollo and Diana, to kill Niobe's family, which they did with arrows.

1. 222. Pope has a line much like this which shows how acceptable such a periphrasis as "the feathered deaths" was to the taste of the age.

"And hissing fly the feather'd fates below." — Trans., *Iliad*, I., 68.

1. 228. Chaucer's Emily expresses no such modern convictions. She is old-fashioned in such matters.

1. 229. Means obsequious enough as a lover [to serve = to love, in the language of chivalry. See I., 396, etc.], but overbearing as a mate.

1. 233. What are the three shapes she assumes?

1. 243. Emily's emotion is indicated by Chaucer by the two lines:—

"Bihold, goddesse of cleré chastité  
The bittré teeres that on my cheekès fall."

1. 254. The two flames symbolize the two heroes, of course. Which is which? Why? Chaucer is simpler and clearer.

1. 269. **The rest.** Ellipsis; the meaning is that in other respects she appeared as.

l. 277. A comma after "man" will give a clew to the sense. Jove, the thunderer, alone knows the issue.

l. 284. **no more.** Recall her previous declaration of sisterhood.

l. 290. The next hour that was ruled by Mars, who ruled in turn with the other seven planets, the "heptarchy of power."

ll. 296, 306. Dryden's Arcite, like his Palamon, is wordy in his address. His whole speech is longer by about twelve lines in Dryden than in Chaucer. Can you guess at some of Dryden's elaborations?

l. 314. **a lover.** When in love with Venus.

l. 329. **for.** For the sake of, that is, remembering the fire that you once felt.

**Generous.** Cf. previous usage.

l. 338. **atchievements.** Armorial bearings.

l. 345. A common enough vow in early times, especially in the East. Cf. the familiar oath, "by my beard," met in Shakespeare.

ll. 349-350. This contrasts with Palamon's declaration (III., 159-160). Arcite has a more warrior-like desire for victory; but what sort of lover is he, after all? Well might Jove say (III., 278) that Emily should be wed by him who loved her best. Is there any other evidence to bear this out?

l. 351. **the close.** Enclosed place. Cf. garden-close, cathedral-close.

l. 352. Note the onomatopoetic effect in this and the following lines.

l. 363. **Paraphrase.**

l. 366. **Half sunk.** The sense is obvious ; but find a synonym. Cf. the phrase, "his voice sank." What is the significance of the word of victory being thus "half sunk and half pronounced" ?

l. 373. **his wife.** Junc, suspicious and shrewish at times, as she had every reason for being.

l. 375. **Saturn.** Father of Jupiter, and dethroned by him. He was regarded as a mischief-maker and producer of strife, and so on the principle of setting a thief to catch a thief, he knew how to compose a quarrel, as here.

ll. 381-382. Cf. Chaucer. Dryden, you will note, has, through misunderstanding, missed the point of Chaucer's adage :—

"As soth [truly] is sayd, eelde [old age] hath gret advantage,  
In eeldē is both wisdom and usage ;  
Men may the olde at-renne [outstrip], but nat at-rede [outwit in counsel]."

l. 383. The astrological detail is Dryden's, and need scarcely be regarded, especially as there is a general confusion of planets with deities, of astrology and mythology. When "trined," i.e. 120° apart, two planets influenced for good ; when "joined," so as to obscure, as in this case, they portended ill. Hence Saturn's disposition to aid Venus and get the better of Mars.

l. 387. **stint.** Stop.

l. 391. **course.** Orbit ; the largest of all the then known planets' courses.

l. 393. The allusion here and in what follows is to the changing influence of the planets according to the signs of



the zodiac through which they move, as these signs were, in their special relations to the four elements, either watery, earthy, fiery, or airy ("etherial").

l. 416. **complexions.** Temperaments; Chaucer's word. It is used in the same sense by Shakespeare: *Hamlet*, I., iv., 27.

l. 420. **Chronos.** Cronos, Greek name for Saturn.

l. 421. **effect.** Outcome, issue, of the arrangement.

ll. 433-436. Chaucer introduces no such Homeric participation of the gods. What do you say of it?

l. 437. **generous.** High-spirited, as being good-blooded or well-born. Cf. II., 188.

l. 439. **harness.** Any kind of armor.

ll. 439-440. Scan, and note the peculiar effects secured.

l. 446. **morions.** Open helmets.

l. 447. Scan. What obsolete pronunciation is brought out?

l. 460. **advance.** Uplift. Cf. Shakespeare:—

"The fringed curtain of thine eye advance."—*Tempest*, I., ii., 407.

l. 468. Dryden is more lengthy, more detailed, than Chaucer in this description from l. 430. His narrative has more speed.

l. 469. Identify the "fair freckled king" and the "black monarch" (472).

l. 483. **cap-a-pe.** From head to foot; French, *cap-à-pied*.

l. 491. **king-at-arms.** In Chaucer, a herald; it is here the chief herald.

l. 493. **gentle kind.** "Gentlefolk," gentry.

l. 496. **rebate.** Moderate, mitigate.

l. 499. **short of.** An idiom still often used, and would be clearer here if Dryden had said "short of death," *i.e.* not beyond the point of it.

l. 505. Construe thus: nor thrust at close quarters with the sharp ("biting") point of the short sword, — which Chaucer says that one must not even carry, — but strike at arm's length, or at a distance.

ll. 506-507. Only one charge with the sharp ashen spear is allowed.

l. 510. **at mischief.** "He that is at meschief" (Chaucer), that is, worsted, and at his opponent's mercy. At one time people spoke of *bonchief* and *mischief*, meaning good and ill fortune.

ll. 512-515. Somewhat elliptical. Be sure you understand the syntax.

l. 516. **dooms.** Meaning? Cf. the colloquialism "he is doomed to die."

l. 521. **provident.** As wishing to avoid waste; like a provident housewife. Cf. prudent, which is a contraction of provident.

l. 529. How read? Scan. The reckless extravagance of the carpeting is Dryden's.

l. 539. **many.** Attendants or retinue. See note on I., 601.

l. 549. This little tag of Dryden's means that winds make less noise on land than on sea!

l. 553. **divides the plain.** By occupying his half of the field.

l. 556. **self.** Chaucer's word = same or very, as in self-same. You have doubtless met it in the *Merchant of Venice*.

l. 563. **sized.** "Of a size," as we sometimes say; well-matched.

l. 570. **tale.** Count, tally; as in Milton's "And every shepherd tells his tale," and in Psalm xc. 9.

l. 583. An effective line. See that you get the effect in reading. The description generally abounds in striking alliterations and other onomatopoeic effects. Note how rapidly the verse moves at times.

**Darkling.** A favorite word with the poets. Cf. Shakespeare's

"O, wilt thou darkling leave me? Do not so."

— *Midsummer Night's Dream*, II., ii., 86.

l. 597. **Hauberks.** Coats of chain armor. Note the effect of the alliterative "h's." How they suggest the hacking!

l. 611. **By fits.** At certain times. Chaucer says that Theseus ordered them to stop for refreshment.

l. 613. **the rivals.** The two heroes.

l. 614. **ward.** Guard. This extraordinary, unsoldier-like forgetfulness is Dryden's. Down to l. 629 Dryden deals very freely with Chaucer.

l. 625. **challenges the food.** Figure?

l. 635. **overlaid.** Overwhelmed.

l. 640. **he . . . him.** Who? whom?

l. 650. **hateful.** Cf. I., 214.

ll. 660-676. Dryden pads in very bad taste. He invents

Mars's ill-mannered insults and the sardonic laughter of the gods. Explain how these are incongruous. Such phrases as "the standing army of the sky," "distilled her tears," "the blustering fool," especially grate upon the ear.

l. 660. **own.** Meaning?

ll. 663-664. When Jove overthrew his father Saturn, one of the Titans, a race of mighty descendants of heaven and earth.

l. 685. **endlong.** Along the lists to the end.

l. 698. **with his feet.** We should rather say, "in his feet," or "his feet quivered."

l. 707. **entranced.** In a trance or swoon.

l. 714. **compelled.** In Latin sense of driven or gathered together.

l. 722. **sovereign draughts.** An unusual use of "sovereign" in the sense of irresistible, subduing.

ll. 728-736. These sententious aphoristic lines, like 740, etc., are, as you will doubtless feel by this time, Dryden's. Chaucer keeps to his story, and does not sermonize.

ll. 761-763. Chaucer is more picturesque:—

"And certynly ther [where] nature will not wirche [work]  
Farwel phisik; go ber [bear] the man to chirche."

l. 762. **crazy.** Injured, flawed. Cf. Shakespeare's

"Thy crazed title to my certain right."

—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, I., i., 91.

l. 766. **hardly.** With difficulty. Cf. Bible usage: "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." — Matt. xix. 23.

l. 766. **against right.** Chaucer does not thus declare against Arcite ; but what passages support Dryden's view ?

l. 779. **officious.** Tendering his offices or services ; so used elsewhere by Dryden, as in the opening line of his stanzas on Cromwell.

l. 780. Turn to Chaucer, whose directness and touching simplicity Dryden misses as usual.

ll. 789-793. These lines, reminiscent of Shakespeare, may be compared with Chaucer : —

“ What is this world ? What asken men to have ?  
Now with his love, now in his coldè grave  
Allone withouten eny compaignye.”

ll. 800-816. Dryden's addition, to support his championship of Palamon. Chaucer's Arcite does not see that he has acted meanly. Which is the better view ? Whose Arcite is the more admirable ?

l. 804. **doubt. Fear.**

ll. 820-821. This last loyalty to Palamon, this reviving spark of the old affection, is, of course, the touching feature of this death scene. It is more striking in Chaucer because Arcite's speech is much shorter — about half the length of Dryden's.

l. 831. **below.** Seizing his feet first.

l. 837. Chaucer concludes : —

“ But on his lady yit he caste his eye  
His lastè word was, ‘ Mercy, Emelye.’ ”

l. 841. **demonstrative.** Conclusive. In what follows Dryden again mounts the pulpit on his own account.

l. 848. Chaucer says that Emily shrieked and Palamon howled.

l. 864. but Hector was not then. This was before the time of Hector, the hero of the Trojan War on the Trojan side. This is Dryden's addition; does anything in the poem warrant it?

l. 874. Still. Always, as before in this poem. Where?

l. 878. sincere. In the Latin sense of unmixed.

l. 892. conscious laund. The place that had known them before, with the suggestion that it was aware of the honor done to it. "Laund" has been used before.

l. 899. Sere. Dry, as in Milton's "ivy never sere." — *Lycidas*, 2.

doddered. Infirm with age.

l. 901. How read this to get the full effect? Scan thus:—

$\overset{\frown}{F}\overset{\frown}{e}\overset{\frown}{l}\overset{\frown}{l}$ ,  $\overset{\frown}{s}\overset{\frown}{p}\overset{\frown}{l}\overset{\frown}{i}\overset{\frown}{t}$  | and  $\overset{\frown}{l}\overset{\frown}{a}\overset{\frown}{y}$  |  $\overset{\frown}{t}\overset{\frown}{h}\overset{\frown}{e}$   $\overset{\frown}{f}\overset{\frown}{u}$  |  $\overset{\frown}{e}\overset{\frown}{l}$   $\overset{\frown}{i}\overset{\frown}{n}$  |  $\overset{\frown}{a}$   $\overset{\frown}{r}\overset{\frown}{o}\overset{\frown}{w}$  |

l. 902. Vulcanian. Explain the appropriateness of the epithet.

l. 907. mixed with myrtle. Chaucer's wreath is of laurel only. The myrtle suggests a tribute to Venus, since, after all, Arcite was Love's servant unto death.

l. 911. Menaced. Used intransitively.

l. 927. and one his shield. Syntax?

l. 934. master-street. Chaucer's phrase. In what other words is "master" so compounded?

l. 955. mourner-yew. As such, it stands in many an English churchyard. Cf. Gray's

"Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade" (*Elegy*, 13)

and Tennyson's

"Old yew, which graspest at the stones  
That name the underlying dead."

— *In Memoriam*, II, 1.

l. 956. **swimming alder.** As growing in moist places or by streams.

l. 960. **With.** As well as. The passage is confused, and one doubts whether Dryden really wrote "ranked" in l. 959. Chaucer is clear enough:—

"How they weren feld [felled] shall nat be toold for me;  
Ne hou the goddés ronnen up and doun,  
Disheryt of here [their] habitacioun,  
In whiche they wonéden [dwelt] in reste and pees,  
Nymphés, Faunés, and Amadriadés."

l. 963. **seats.** Places, homes. Cf. Goldsmith's

"Seats of my youth, when every sport could please."  
— *Deserted Village*, 6.

l. 992. **wakes.** Vigils for the dead, which are still held in Ireland. The word is akin to "watch" and "waits." Cf. "Christmas waits."

l. 995. **gave or took.** In what sense?

l. 1013. **the event.** The issue, outcome.

l. 1018. Shall we call this disquisition of the philosophic Theseus a "tedious homily of love," or not? Most readers will be inclined to skip it in their anxiety to know whether what they already suspect really happens, to conclude this tale of strife. It certainly does arrest the progress of the story. And

yet its introduction here might be defended on some grounds. It exhibits Chaucer's graver interest in life. He draws his thought largely from the writings of Boetius, a scholar and thinker at the court of Theodoric, whose writings Chaucer translated. Dryden's rendering is very free and long-drawn-out; but he is a master in this kind of sermonic writing.

l. 1021. **jarring seeds.** Warring elements in chaos; before they were, as he goes on to say, reduced to harmony by Love. Cf. the first stanza of Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*.

l. 1027. Supply, before "how long," some such word as "determining."

l. 1030. **for will is free.** This contradicts the fatalism which runs through the poem.

l. 1033. **suborn.** Procure.

ll. 1036-1037. The couplet is echoed in Pope's famous lines:—

"All are but parts of one stupendous whole,  
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul."

—*Essay on Man*, 267, 268.

l. 1045. **Corrupta.** Used intransitively = becomes corrupted.

l. 1046. **virtue.** In the sense of efficacy or power. Cf. Bible usage: "For there went virtue out of him, and he healed them all." — Luke vi. 19.

l. 1047. **makes another mass.** By new combinations.

l. 1049. **by succession.** In its turn; for a term.

l. 1057. **perioda.** As in Shakespeare = conclusion, end.



l. 1071. **three souls.** It was held that man had three souls: the vegetive (l. 1070), or vegetal, which he shares with all living things; the sensitive, or animal, by which he feels, and which he shares with animals; and the rational, by which he reasons, and which is proper to man alone. As l. 1070 indicates, these develop one after another.

l. 1072. **Some thus.** Supply the ellipsis.

l. 1079. This familiar line is in Chaucer, who got it from St. Jerome.

l. 1093. **joy us.** The use of "joy" as a verb, meaning to gladden, is often met with in Shakespeare. Recall Brutus's

"My heart doth joy that yet in all my life  
I found no man but he was true to me."

l. 1096. Is there a call for a new paragraph here? Dryden has been dragging out Chaucer's sermon or "series," as he calls it, unnecessarily.

l. 1106. **good vicissitude of joy.** Meaning?

There are one or two characteristic passages in Chaucer's conclusion, which may well be noticed: thus in the couplet, —

"And thus with allé blisse and melodye  
Hath Palamon y-wedded Emelye," —

there is a charming suggestiveness in the use of the word "melodye." The concluding lines, too, have a Chaucerian savor that is enjoyable: —

"For now is Palamon in allé wele,  
Lyvyng in bliss, in richesse, and in heele;

And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,  
And he hire servyth al-so gentilly,  
That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene  
Of jalousie or any oother tene.

Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye,  
And God save al this fairè compaigne. Amen."

The last couplet recalls the knight and his fellow-pilgrims. He makes his polite bow.



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